

BBC

THE WORKHOUSE
A DICKENSIAN NIGHTMARE?



HISTORY

MAGAZINE

BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING HISTORY MAGAZINE

September 2021 / www.historyextra.com

WITCHES ON TRIAL

Why the devil stalked Salem in 1692

Who was the man in the iron mask?

Holocaust in the Middle East

How the Nazi genocide extended beyond Europe

**Walter Scott:
The man who
invented Scotland?**

ROMANS AND FASCISTS

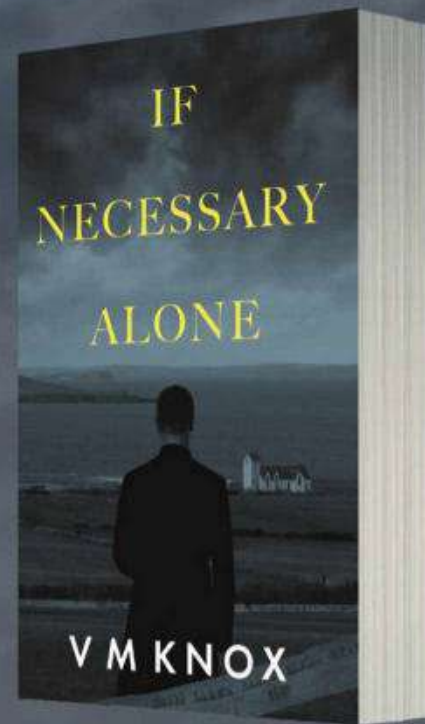
How the far right hijacked the ancient world



Intrigue, Murder, Revenge and Embedded Nazi Spies



In Spite of All Terror is the first in a series of crime thrillers by V M Knox that mix historical fact, crime fiction and superb characterisation. Set in September 1940, when Britain stood alone against an imminent Nazi invasion, Reverend Clement Wisdom and other men from the restricted occupations, were called to join the covert Auxiliary Units. Following the murders of several of Clement's team, he finds himself embroiled in the murky world of espionage where things are never what they seem.

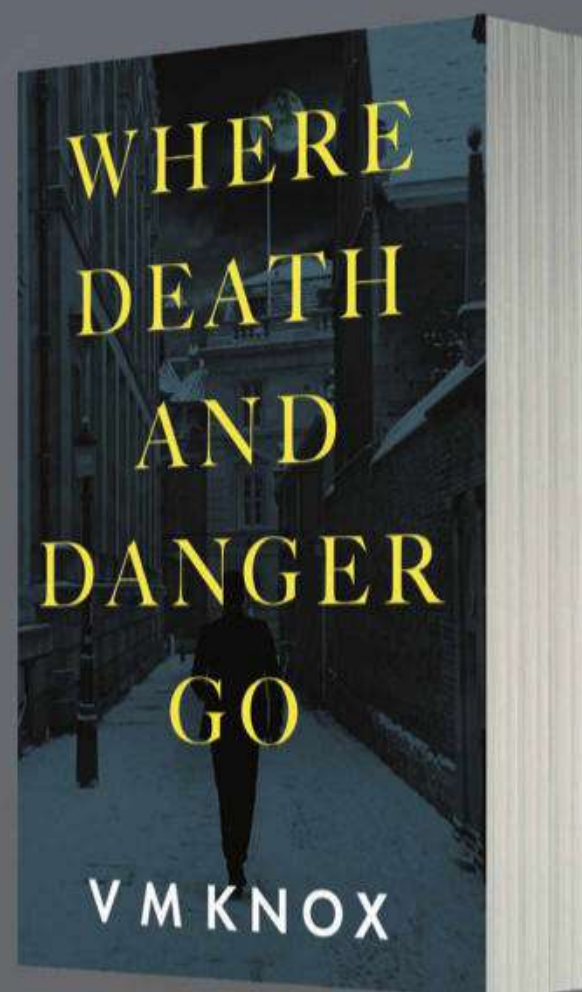


If Necessary Alone is the second thriller in this World War II crime series. Clement Wisdom, now a Major in Special Duties Branch, Secret Intelligence Service, is sent to remote Caithness to investigate illicit encrypted radio transmissions. As soon as he arrives there, an out-station wireless operator is found brutally murdered and Clement becomes entangled in a web of death and silence. Alone, and in the bitter Scottish winter, Clement must stay one step ahead of a killer if he is to remain alive.

Where Death and Danger Go is the third book in this World War II crime series. Set in the dark days of 1941, Britain fights on alone. Fear hangs in the air. Some yearn for peace and an end to the relentless Nazi bombing. Others are spurred on to fight. And some will manipulate a divided country for their own ends.

On a winter's night, a German spy parachutes into Cambridgeshire while another man is secretly murdered in the same field. Is he another enemy spy or has he been sent to his death? Either way, a killer lurks.

Major Clement Wisdom of Special Duties Branch of the SIS is sent to discover the dead man's identity and uncovers a sinister network of conspiracy where kidnap, murder and revenge threaten not only the safety of the nation but also Clement's life.



All three books can be purchased from online book sellers, Waterstones and independent book shops.

“Thanks in part to Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*, the workhouse is often seen as the epitome of all that was wrong with 19th-century Britain. At a time of great advances in industry and technology, the country’s poorest inhabitants were forced to endure frequent humiliation – and dreadful food. But how accurate is the Dickensian vision of workhouse life? According to historian Peter Higginbotham, the picture is a little more complicated. Though the institution was hardly idyllic, conditions varied enormously and improved dramatically over the course of the Victorian age. Turn to page 20 to find more.

Our cover feature this month takes us to New England and the Salem witch trials of 1692–93. What began with the unusual behaviour of two young girls, resulted in a mass panic that led to the hanging of 19 people and the deaths of six others. Ellie Cawthorne has explored the witch trials for a new *HistoryExtra* podcast series, and in her accompanying article she draws on expert insights to seek to explain one of the most notorious incidents of supernatural paranoia in American history. You can read her piece on page 58.

At the same time as Salem was engulfed in witch fever, a mysterious prisoner was languishing in a French jail. Today he’s known to us as the man in the iron mask. His identity has been debated for centuries, but now historian Josephine Wilkinson believes she has determined who he really was. On page 33 she introduces her contender. Might one age-old mystery finally have been solved?

Rob Attar

Editor



THREE THINGS I’VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

1. Walter Scott topped the lot

Despite Scott’s renown, I’d not realised before quite how successful his novels had been. In Annika Bautz’s feature, she reveals that he’d sold more than 2 million books by the mid-19th century (p66).

2. Ghosts appeared in court

Supernatural tales played a big part in the Salem witch trials, but I was surprised to learn that ghostly evidence has helped achieve murder convictions more recently – even the 21st century (p40).

3. George III rose and fell

In light of the recent debates around statues, I was interested to read of a monument to George III in New York that was both erected and felled in the 1770s as attitudes towards the British monarch swung dramatically (p74).



THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS



Katherine Harloe

“The enthusiasm of far-right groups for classical symbols may be uncomfortable for classicists and ancient historians to confront, but it is crucial that we do so. False and harmful narratives should not be left uncorrected.”

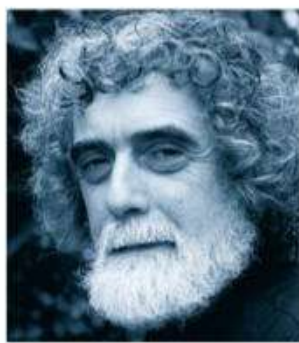
Katherine explores the far right’s obsession with the ancient world on page 27



Josephine Wilkinson

“Few prisoners go on to become legends, but the mysterious man in the iron mask is one of the exceptions. My new book looks at the truth behind this remarkable story.”

Josephine puts forward her theory as to the identity of the man in the iron mask on page 33



Gershom Gorenberg

“As I uncovered the spycraft that brought Britain victory at El Alamein, I found another forgotten story: the Nazi plan to murder the Jews of the Middle East.” Gershom chronicles a little-known aspect of the Holocaust on page 50



Alex von Tunzelmann

“It would be great to bring the temperature down on some of the debates about statues – after all, they are meant to represent us as humans, so it’s okay to engage with them on that level.” Alex discusses the debates raging over statues on page 74

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Why did two girls' accusations of dark magic send 19 people to the gallows in 1692? **Ellie Cawthorne** investigates

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Annika Bautz argues that Scotland's international image has been partly shaped by the brilliance of this 19th-century novelist



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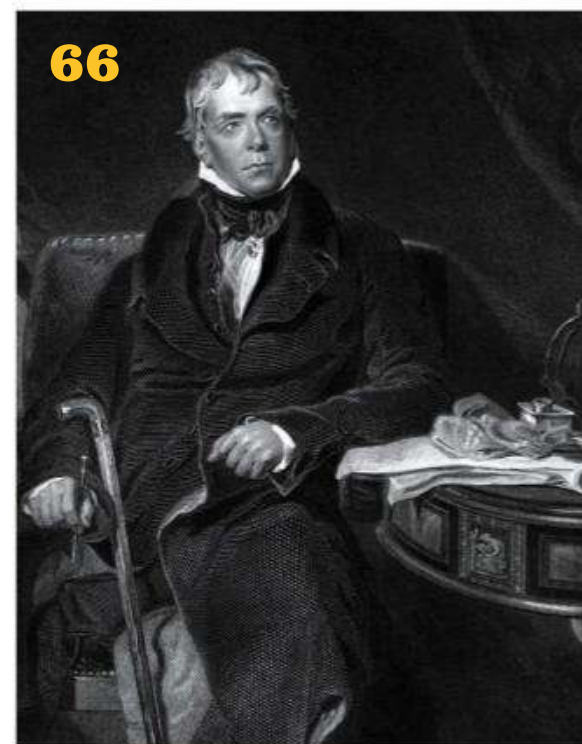
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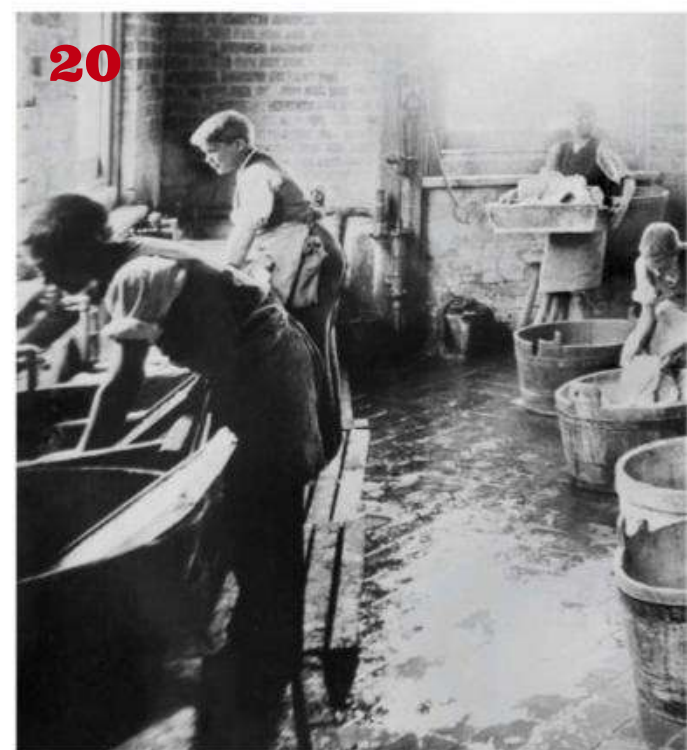
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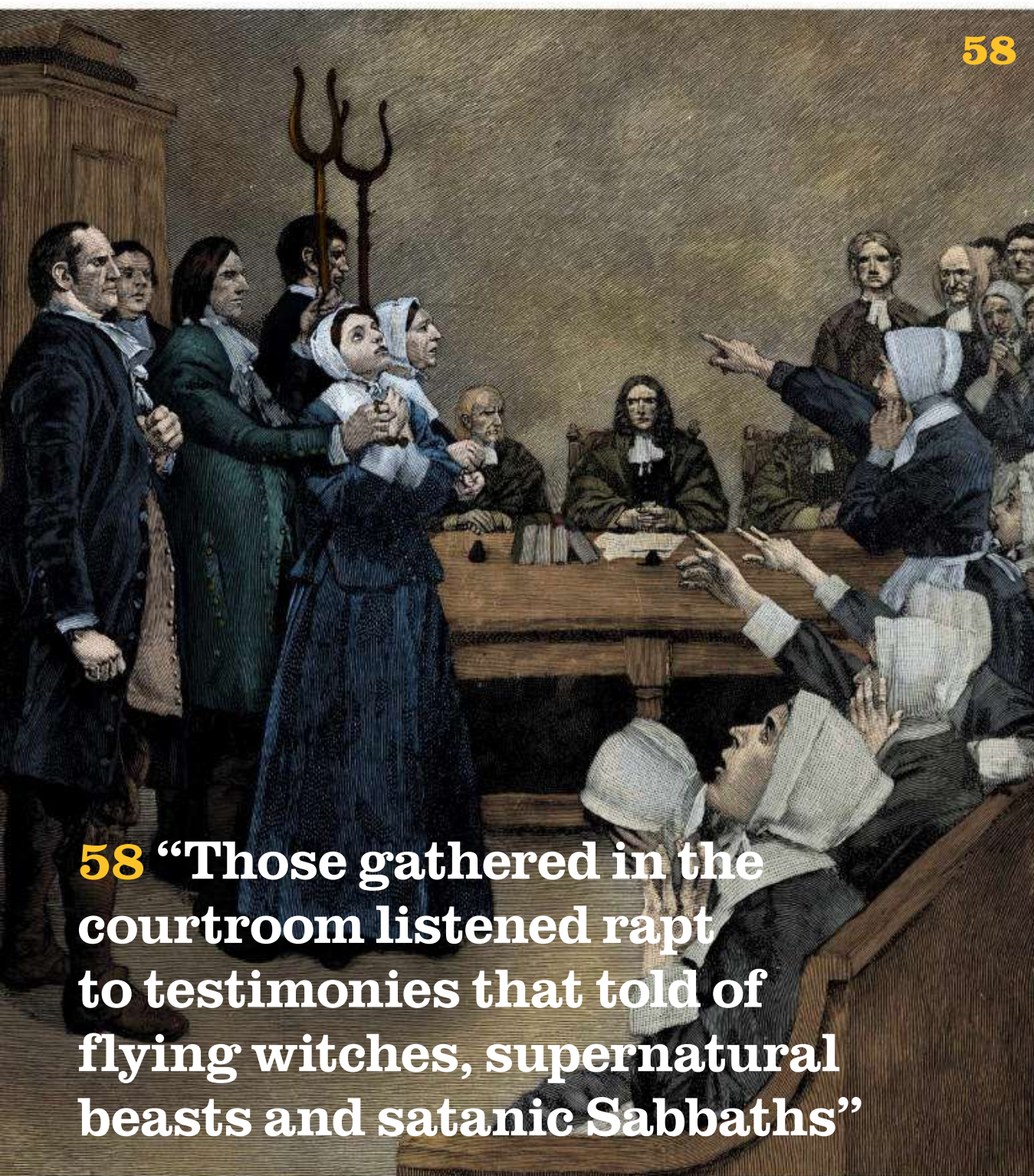
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58 “Those gathered in the courtroom listened rapt to testimonies that told of flying witches, supernatural beasts and satanic Sabbaths”



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Volume Two: War at Sea

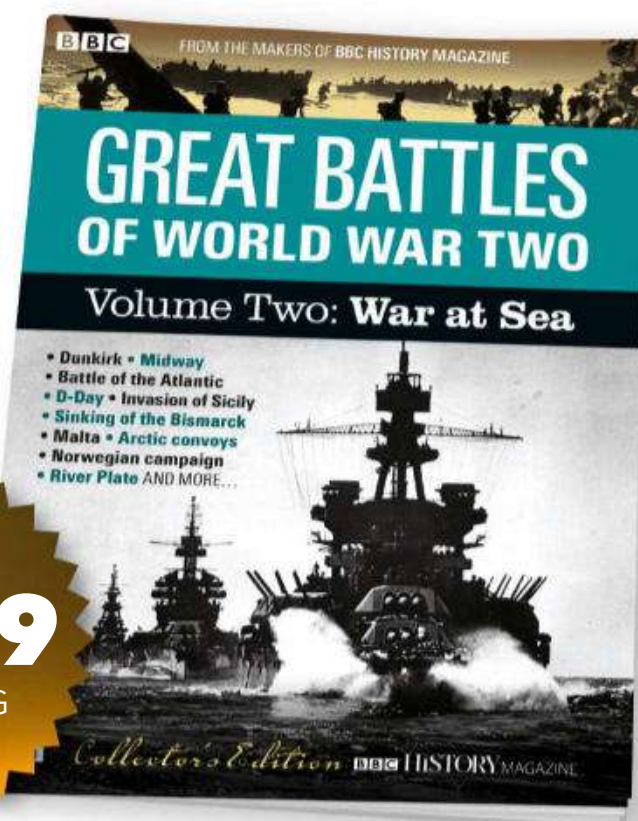
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EYE-OPENER

The lost children

These children's shoes, neatly arranged on Parliament Hill in Ottawa in June, represent the 215 children now known to have died at a school for Canada's indigenous children across almost a century. The discovery of unmarked graves at the former site of Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia was followed by similar finds at another institution a month later.

From the mid-19th century until the late 20th century, at least 150,000 indigenous children were taken from their families as part of a government policy of forced assimilation. Unsanitary conditions meant disease spread rapidly, and pupils suffered physical and sexual abuse. In 1945, the death rate for children in such institutions was almost five times higher than among pupils elsewhere in Canada.

There is no clear picture of how many children died at residential schools or where they are buried, and indigenous groups have long suspected the death toll to be higher than previously accepted. "The outrage and the surprise from the general public is welcome, no question," said Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde. "But... survivors have been saying this for years and years."

TALKING POINTS

Plot twists



Yet another TV drama about the Tudor dynasty led Twitter users to ask: which other historical stories should be adapted for the small screen? **ANNA WHITELOCK** went channel surfing

With Channel 5's recent *Anne Boleyn* series retelling the story of the Tudor queen, economic historian **Mark Koyama** (@MarkKoyama) remarked: "It is crazy how many TV shows and movies retread the same historical ground. How many more times do we need to see Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn? There are so many other interesting historical stories."

Dr Anton Howes (@antonhowes) quickly responded: "I think that Tudor privateers, merchants or explorers are fine. Just nothing that's about Henry VIII's or Elizabeth I's private lives. In fact, a show about Edward VI's regents would be pretty good," but he concluded: "It is NOT allowed to include Lady Jane Grey." **Yung Tugwell** (@TugwellYung) "would love a biopic about [sixth-century Byzantine empress] Theodora, or... a slow-burn horror film about the battle of Pliska [a ninth-century clash between the Byzantine and First Bulgarian empires]. Got it all: Byzantine arrogance, Bulgars fighting for their nation, guerrilla warfare, skull cups, really incredible stuff."

Pseudoerasmus (@pseudoerasmus) had quite the manifesto: "1. Ban Tudor dramas. 2. Ban fall of the Roman republic dramas. 3. Dramatise the [story of the

second-century BC brothers] Gracchi. Land reform is fashionable. 4. A long serial of the wars over the carcass of Alexander [the Great's] empire. 5. Film Gore Vidal's *Julian* [a 1964 historical novel chronicling the life of the fourth-century Roman emperor]."

Rustlem (@rustlem) thought that "a series on the life of [ancient Athenian nobleman] Alcibiades is long overdue," while **Jessica Yogini** (@JessicaYogini) thought that "a good TV series about the Chinese cultural revolution would be so instructive, once people realised the parallels with their own world".

Tony Addison (@TonysAngle) voted for "Mali's empire, especially Mansa Musa... who inflated the Egyptian economy by bringing so much gold (on 100 camels) on his pilgrimage to Mecca." **Tristan Reed** (@TristanReed_) concurred: "This would be a great series."

Duncan Weldon (@DuncanWeldon) put together a wishlist of biopics of figures, including: "Keynes, Napoleon, Oliver Cromwell, Bismarck, and Charles V and Francis I as rivals". **David Clingingsmith** (@dclingi) suggested an "unstinting East India Company vs Mughals series", while **Catgast** (@catgast) wanted to see a "miniseries on Prince Eugene of Savoy [featuring] Marlborough only as a side-act", adding: "In general, the Wars of Succession from a non-Brit viewpoint are sexy."

Well, there's a thought. Roll over the Tudors... **H**

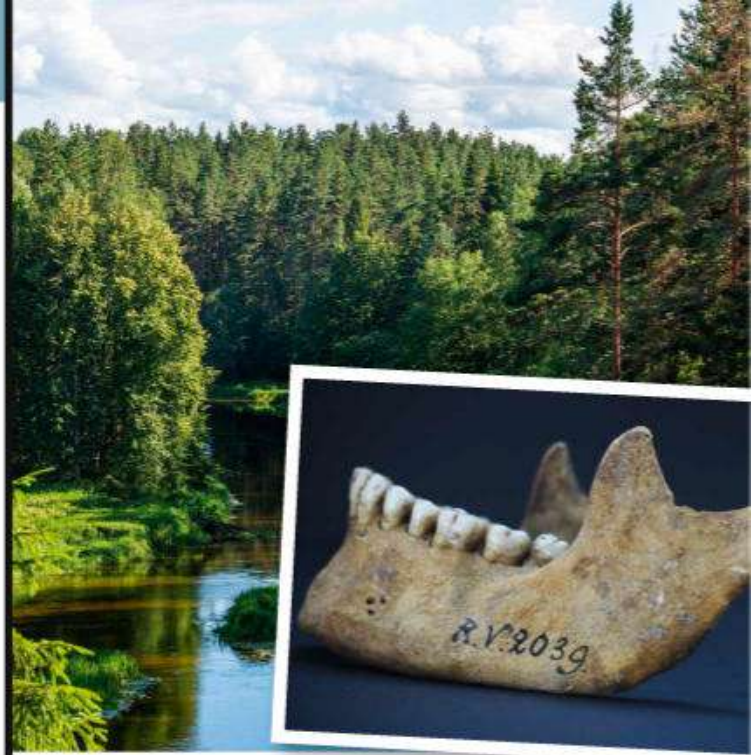
Anna Whitelock is professor of the history of monarchy and head of the history department at Royal Holloway University of London



Jodie Turner-Smith and Mark Stanley in Channel 5's biopic. "How many more times do we need to see Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn?" asked Mark Koyama



Join the debate at twitter.com/historyextra



Part of the skull of a Neolithic man found at a site in what is now Latvia (above). The hunter-gatherer died in his twenties of what may have been the plague

DISEASE

Latvia man "may be first plague victim"

A man who died more than 5,000 years ago in present-day Latvia may have been the first person to be infected with the plague, experts believe.

The Neolithic hunter-gatherer was one of four people buried at a midden, or waste dump, near the river Salac. Analysis of his remains suggest that the man died with an ancient strain of the *Yersinia pestis* bacterium in his blood, possibly after being bitten by a rodent.

It's thought that this particular strain emerged about 7,000 years ago, when it split from all other forms of the pathogen, making it the earliest known version of the bacterium that became known as the Black Death. But unlike the variant that killed tens of millions in the 14th century, this Stone Age iteration lacked the gene that allowed it to be spread by fleas.

That missing adaptation has led the project's researchers to suggest that it would have transferred from animals to humans only occasionally, rather than spreading rapidly through the population as happened centuries later. The theory has prompted debate as experts have regarded *Y. pestis* as a likely cause for the dramatic decline in Europe's population at the end of the Neolithic Age, approximately 5,500 years ago. The high levels of the bacterium in the Latvia remains also suggest that the man may have lived with a mild version of the disease for some time, although other experts suggest that more evidence is needed to draw any firm conclusions. **H**

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**



Notes and sketches made by Emily and Anne Brontë are included in the "lost library"

▲ Archives unite in bid to save literary treasures

Major UK institutions including the British Library, Oxford's Bodleian Library and the National Library of Scotland have joined forces in an effort to raise funds to keep a literary resource publicly available.

The Honresfield Library contains more than 500 manuscripts, letters and first editions written by such luminaries as Jane Austen, Robert Burns and Emily Brontë. It was originally compiled at the turn of the 20th century by brothers Alfred and William Law, who kept it at Honresfield House, near Rochdale. The collection, which bears the

house's name, has been almost entirely inaccessible since Alfred's son died in 1939, and only re-emerged recently when plans were revealed to put it up for auction.

The initiative to keep the Honresfield Library in the public domain is being led by the charity Friends of the National Libraries, which is exploring several options including private philanthropy and crowd-funding. In June, the company due to put the collection up for sale agreed to postpone the auction while efforts to raise the £15m needed continue.



▲ BBC adds new online programme search tool

Decades of the BBC's output can now be explored online thanks to the launch of a searchable Programme Index. Including links to thousands of television and radio shows available online, as well as information and scans taken from the listings magazine *Radio Times*, the feature is the latest iteration of the corporation's archival project. The earliest entries date back to 1923, and can be searched by details such as programme title, subject, contributors and date. For more details, visit genome.ch.bbc.co.uk.

Fashionable shoes led to surge in medieval bunions ▼

Among the fashion trends that swept medieval Europe, one proved particularly enduring: the pointy shoe. Now a new study has revealed that the style led to a marked increase in bunions. Analysis by University of Cambridge archaeologists of 177 of the city's skeletons revealed that 27 per cent of those from the 14th and 15th centuries had the deformity (as seen in the example below) compared to six per cent buried between the 11th and 13th century. Sufferers were more likely to be well-off urban men, and many were members of the clergy – despite being forbidden from wearing the shoes.



Iron Age people "deliberately deposited" personal items ▼

We all have them: objects of little value or purpose kept for sentimental reasons. And, according to a new theory about artefacts discovered in a roundhouse at the Iron Age settlement of Broxmouth in Scotland, it's an ancient phenomenon. University of York archaeologist Dr Lindsey Büster suggests that everyday objects found within the walls of the roundhouse – including gaming pieces and bone spoons – were deliberately put there, rather than being kept safe in hoards or discarded, due to their emotional value.



The remains of an Iron Age roundhouse in Scotland, which features objects incorporated into its walls – possibly for sentimental reasons

Huge skull prompts new evolution questions ▼

An ancient skull has been hailed as potentially belonging to a previously unknown species of human. First unearthed in Harbin, in north-east China, in 1933, but only brought to scientists' attention recently, the fossil (right) has been classified *Homo longi*, or "dragon man", by researchers in China. They suggest that the skull is at least 146,000 years old and belonged to a member of a group more closely related to modern humans than Neanderthals. Other experts urged caution, suggesting that the skull may instead represent an already discovered group. **H**





MICHAEL WOOD ON... THE RETURN OF HISTORY FESTIVALS

// The communal retelling of history is magical. Just ask the kids! //

One of the pleasures of the summer, as lockdown was lifted, has been the return of history festivals. These live events have become part of our cultural landscape over the past few years, and what we have been missing really hit me at the Chalke Valley History Festival, held in the Wiltshire countryside at the end of June. What a treat to see big audiences again in the open air; tents and stalls teeming with people having a good time in a beautiful landscape; translucent blue sunsets shading into starry nights as we listened to stories round the fireside.

The talks were great: Tom Stoppard being interviewed by his biographer Hermione Lee; James Rebanks conjuring up the lives of three generations of Cumbrian farmers; Cat Jarman teasing out a Viking epic from the travels of a Carnelian bead; Rana Mitter on China's forgotten role as the fourth ally in the Second World War.

This year there was much more living history: Romans, Saxons and Vikings, Roundheads and Cavaliers. Walking through the crowds you could bump into Ragnar Lothbrok, Florence Nightingale or Field Marshal Haig (the latter complete with an immaculately waxed moustache). Among the tents, an Iron Age woman was briefing spellbound kids on her daily life and afterwards a young boy earnestly quizzed her about what Iron Age people ate for breakfast. Next door a blacksmith fashioned nails using hand bellows.

Seeing the children's reaction was a real treat. They loved engaging with history in this way – entering another

world and another time, talking to ordinary people from the past. I met a 10-year-old from Skipton who said she'd liked finding out about Second World War camouflage canoes, although her favourite was when a Roman legionary lunged at her with his sword.

A 13-year-old old history fan from Oxford was also impressed: "The living history people were great. They had time to explain anything I wanted to know. I even liked the main talks, which were easy to understand even for people who knew nothing about the subject, like me!" She would have liked more events that weren't centred on British history. Porus and his elephants next year then?

I entirely agree about living history. Working in TV I've always been so grateful for the fabulous attention to detail and the brilliant ability to conjure up a scene, whether small and domestic or large-scale and military. I will never forget filming a re-enactment of the battle of Hastings after which an Anglo-Saxon peasant woman told me: "On this day we lost everything." She was really there! And I guess that is the essence of history: an imaginative engagement with the past. Even the greatest scholars started with that.

The variety on offer at history festivals grows every year. Just from my own recent experience: HistFest (this year hosted online at the British Library); Manchester Histories; Gloucester History Festival (running from 4–19 September this year); the *BBC History Magazine* weekends; not to mention Black History Month with its eye-opening takes on forgotten histories. Which reminds us once again that the best history offers a realistic view of our shared past, of our rich history on this multicultural island. In a nutshell, good, responsible history is a crucial part of our commitment to the public good.

And listening to the children at Chalke Valley also made me feel – not for the first time – that there is a kind of magic in the communal retelling of history. That history is always changing but, almost like strands of DNA, it transmits something of our deeper past down to us.

A friend wrote after the festival: "The drive home from Broad Chalke was magical last night. The evening light on the landscape was something no camera or painting could have captured. Absolutely beautiful. And coming after a talk on the early English, the whole place was suffused with a very ancient feel to it!"

On the last night I gave a talk by the fire about an Anglo-Saxon woman who lived in Chalke Valley more than a thousand years ago, trying to conjure her life from the bare facts in her will. And I spoke her words. For, after all, if we want to understand the people of the past, don't we want to hear them speak? The kids were right after all! **H**

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his books include *The Story of China* (Simon & Schuster, 2020). His twitter handle is @mayavision

BBC



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Rome's stunning
Colosseum, which you
can visit on Marella's
Highlights of the
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YOUR QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

Q: Will we need a coronavirus test every time we visit a foreign port?

TM: For our UK coastal cruises, you'll need to take a lateral flow test before sailing. Once on board, there will not be daily COVID-19 testing, but daily temperature checks will be in place. Testing may be required for international cruises and we'll update customers once we know more.

Q: Do you need to prove you have had both vaccinations and will you accept the new certificate we can get in Scotland from Patient Access?

TM: Guests will need to provide proof of vaccination as part of the embarkation process. We'll be contacting anyone booked to sail on our UK cruises to share more information closer to their sailing date.

Q: Will all restaurants be open?

TM: They'll be open – just with a few differences. We'll be socially distancing, of course, as well as following the current guidance for mask wearing on board. In our buffet restaurants, our team will be on hand to serve you and we'll allocate you a seat on arrival to help avoid queues. For our speciality restaurants we recommend booking ahead.

Q: Will we be able to join other people at tables?

TM: As we're social distancing, you should only dine with the people in your cabin, from the same household or travelling party. For the time being you won't be able to share a table with people you've met on the cruise.

Q: Will I still be able to take advantage of the fun activities on board?

TM: There will still be live entertainment – like music and quizzes – around the pool. After dark you can still expect our West End-style performances in the Broadway Show Lounge. Plus, there will be events like our Musical Afternoon tea. All with social distancing measures in place.

Correct at time of print

MARELLA CRUISES

ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in September in history

1 SEPTEMBER 1715

Louis XIV succumbs to gangrene

The Sun King's death marks the end of French ascendancy

There had never been a more splendid king of France than Louis XIV. Feared and admired across Europe, the Sun King was the most powerful monarch of his day, ruling a country that had become by far the continent's most formidable political, military and cultural force. Yet behind the mask of power, Louis often suffered from ill health. He probably had diabetes, as well as dental abscesses, gout and, most embarrassingly, an anal fistula which required painful surgery.

In August 1715, about a month before his 77th birthday, the elderly French king spent a pleasant day hunting. But when he returned to Versailles, he felt an agonising pain in his leg and consulted his doctor. The doctor diagnosed sciatica, but the pain got worse, and soon Louis' leg began to turn black. That was a very bad sign: he had senile gangrene, a condition that is often associated with diabetes.

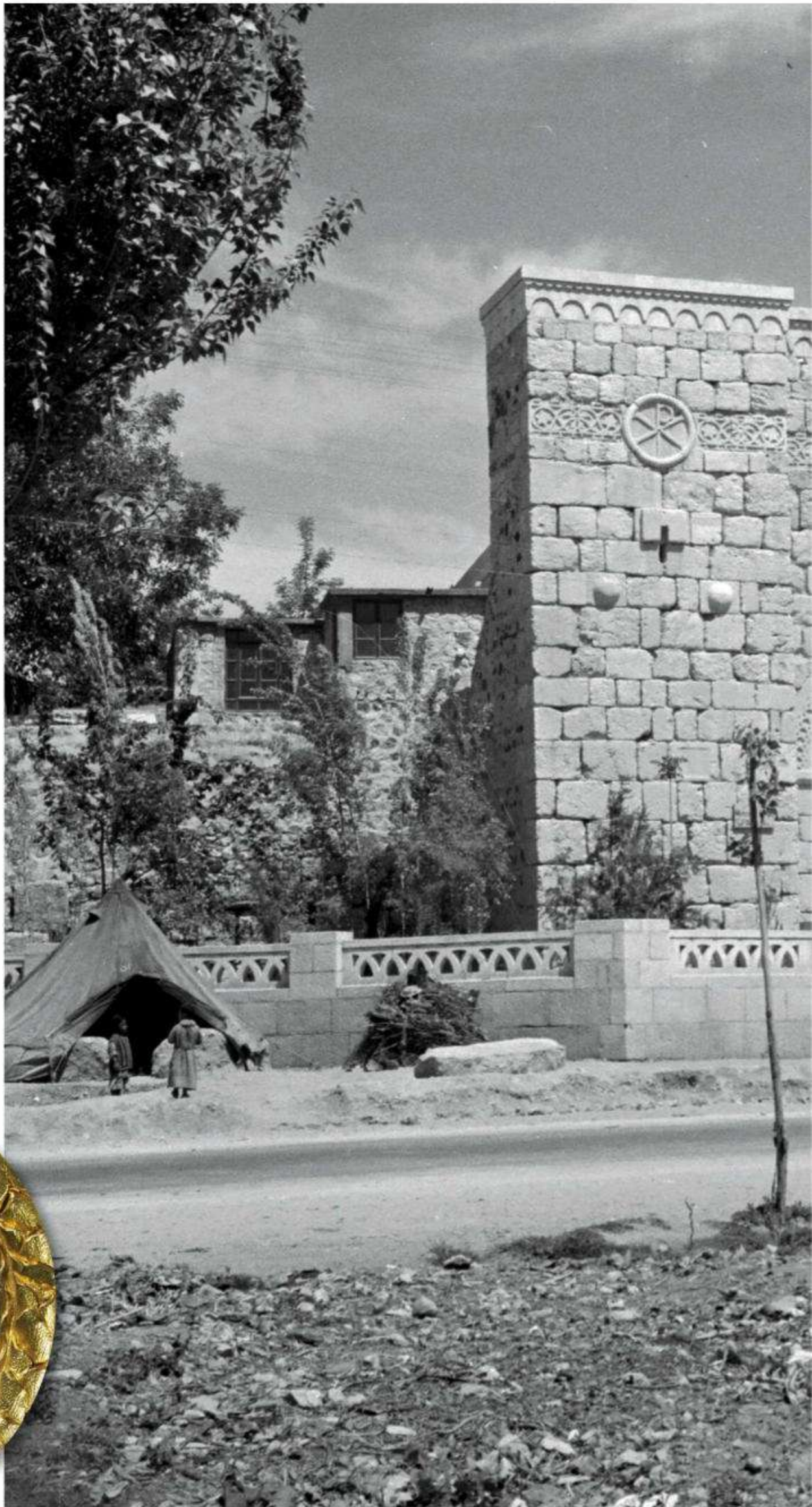
By 25 August, St Louis' Day, the king was confined to bed, and his condition rapidly worsened. By the next day the gangrene had reached his bone, and Louis asked to see his five-year-old great-grandson, who would succeed him as Louis XV. As king the little boy should avoid war at all costs, he told his successor thickly, for "it is the ruin of the people".

By 30 August Louis had slipped into unconsciousness. The royal apartments were put under close guard; all mail to and from the palace was stopped. At last, on 1 September, the Sun King breathed his last. With him passed the era of French supremacy.



A miniature of Louis XIV. The formidable French king died from senile gangrene

BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES



A 2019 production of
The Magic Flute, staged by
the Komische Oper Berlin



30 SEPTEMBER 1791

In the Freihaus-Theater auf der Wieden, near Vienna, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart conducts the first performance of his **new opera, *The Magic Flute***, drawing an ecstatic reaction from the packed house.

One of Damascus's city gates, c1950. In AD 634, Arab invaders breached the East Gate, which was lightly defended as the Romans were celebrating a religious festival



19 SEPTEMBER AD 634

The Arabs capture Damascus

A heretical monk shares a secret that causes the city to fall

At the beginning of the seventh century, Damascus was one of the most important cities in the Roman world. But then everything began to go wrong. War between the Romans and the Persians swept across the Levant, and in AD 613 the city fell to the Persians. Fifteen years later, the emperor Heraclius recaptured vast swathes of territory, and Damascus was a Roman city once again. But the sense of rupture never disappeared, reflected in the heresies and cults that flourished on Syrian soil.

And then came the Arabs. Storming out of the desert beneath the banners of a new faith, Islam, they reached Damascus in mid-August 634. Their commander, the wily Khalid ibn al-Walid, had no siege engines, so he installed his men outside the city's gates and established his headquarters in a nearby monastery. His captains' orders were simple: they must repel any attempt to break out, but there was no need to risk everything on an all-out attack. With time, in the baking summer, they would starve the defenders out.

When news reached Heraclius of the Arab invasion, he sent a relief force of at least 10,000 soldiers. But at the pass of Uqab, Khalid's men fell on the Romans and utterly routed them. In desperation, the city's commander, the emperor's son-in-law Thomas, made two efforts to break out. But he lost thousands of men and was wounded himself in the eye. Day by day, morale was crumbling.

The endgame began on the evening of 18 September, when a Syrian monk called Jonah – one of many monks accused of heresy by the Roman authorities – told Khalid that the defenders were about to celebrate a major religious festival, which meant the walls would be lightly defended. Now Khalid saw his chance. Leading his men in person, he climbed the wall of the East Gate, dropped into the city and opened the gates. By the following morning, Damascus had surrendered. From this day on, the city would belong to Islam.

The tiny republic of San Marino, which grew out of Marinus's Christian hermitage



3 SEPTEMBER AD 301

After escaping from persecution for his faith, the former stonemason Marinus establishes a **Christian hermitage on the summit of Mount Titano** – the foundation of the future republic of San Marino.



A contemporary cartoon of the duel between Viscount Castlereagh, Britain's secretary of war, and foreign secretary George Canning, who was shot in the thigh

21 SEPTEMBER 1809

Two cabinet members duel at dawn

The politicians resort to pistols after a plot comes to light

It was six in the morning, and much of London was still asleep. But on Putney Heath, a small group of men were huddled nervously around a pair of pistols. The two duellists took their places and levelled their weapons. And then – gunshots!

It was a familiar scene, although an

increasingly uncommon one. Duelling was in decline by 1809, even for gentlemen. But this was not any duel. On one side stood Viscount Castlereagh, secretary of war. And on the other stood George Canning, foreign secretary – his own cabinet colleague.

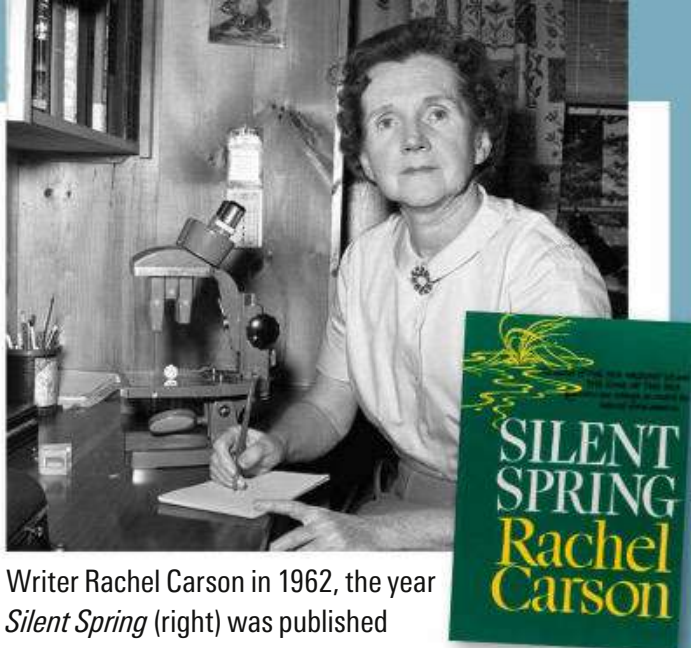
The odd thing about the Castlereagh-Canning duel was that the two men were supposed to be on the same side. Both were deeply opposed to the French Revolution and its consequences; both were keen admirers of William Pitt the Younger; both had spent years working for Britain's victory in the Napoleonic Wars.

But they were temperamentally very different: Castlereagh was reserved, chilly and serious; Canning witty, passionate and charismatic. They had fallen out over troop deployments to Europe, and Canning plotted to have Castlereagh removed so he could take over at the Foreign Office. But Castlereagh

found out and demanded satisfaction.

The odds heavily favoured Castlereagh. An excellent shot, he had once fought a duel over a girl in Ireland. Canning, however, had never fired a pistol in his life. Before leaving for Putney, he wrote his will and a final letter to his wife.

The duel, however, was a bit of a sham-ble. Canning's second was so nervous that he was unable to load his pistol, so Castlereagh's second had to do it for him. When the two men fired, both missed. At this point the seconds tried to arrange a rapprochement, but Canning still refused to apologise. So they had another go. This time Canning's bullet was deflected by one of Castlereagh's buttons, while the latter's shot smacked into Canning's thigh. Fortunately he was not badly hurt and lived to tell the tale. And although the affair caused an enormous public furore, that was the end of that.



Writer Rachel Carson in 1962, the year *Silent Spring* (right) was published

27 SEPTEMBER 1962

A stark ecological warning riles chemical industry

The publication of Silent Spring causes uproar

By the time *Silent Spring* came out on 27 September 1962, the American biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson had been thinking about it for almost two decades. She had become alarmed by the effects of chemical pesticides on the earth, wildlife and human beings, and by 1960 she had amassed piles of notes, including hundreds of potential cases suggesting a link between some pesticides and cancer.

But then tragedy struck: no sooner had Carson started writing than she herself was diagnosed with breast cancer. She kept going, however, and by early 1962 the book was largely finished. Its title came from her agent: a metaphor for the destruction of nature, as birdsong disappeared.

That summer the *New Yorker* began running extracts, and immediately the firestorm started. Chemical companies deluged the publishers with libel threats. One scientist claimed: "If man were to follow the teachings of Miss Carson, we would return to the Dark Ages, and the insects and diseases and vermin would once again inherit the Earth."

Yet Carson stuck to her guns. The Book of the Month Club chose *Silent Spring* as a main selection, and CBS television gave her the chance to rout her critics. The following May, she gave evidence to a White House science committee. By the time she died in April 1964, *Silent Spring*'s place in history was assured as a foundational text of the worldwide ecological movement. **H**

Dominic Sandbrook's new series of history books for children, *Adventures in Time* (Particular Books), is available now

WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

The pioneering use of ether, which made **pain-free operations** a reality

BY JOANNA BOURKE

On 30 September 1846, 175 years ago, a dentist called WTG Morton made a huge leap forward in the quest for pain-free operations, claiming to have used ether as an anaesthetic for the very first time. Just over two weeks later, in the Massachusetts General Hospital, Morton successfully anaesthetised a young man while surgeon John Collins Warren removed a facial tumour. This was the first effective *public* demonstration of using ether.

Until Morton's pioneering work, the pain of surgical operations was so agonising that physicians and patients avoided resorting to the knife unless the patient's life was threatened. Of course, alternative forms of pain relief had long been available. These included administering salicylate (willow bark), alcohol, opium and – from 1805 – morphine. Physicians also blunted pain by freezing limbs, compressing nerves, inducing significant blood loss (exsanguination) and hypnotising patients.

The properties of ether were also well-known before Morton's operations. In 1800, the distinguished chemist Humphry Davy could be heard speculating that nitrous oxide "appears capable of destroying physical pain", so it "may probably be used with advantage during surgical operations". However, proposals that ether could be used in surgical operations were scandalous: pain was believed to be beneficial for healing, not to mention the sufferers' souls.

But this all changed in 1846. This was to be a before and after moment in the history of human and non-human animal suffering. Morton insisted on taking all the credit, rejecting the claims of other discoverers of the drug, including Charles Jackson and Horace Wells. Within six months of Morton's public demonstration, ether was being used worldwide to blunt the pain of surgery, tooth extraction and childbirth.

A few months later – in 1847 – James Young Simpson was able to demonstrate the efficacy of another anaesthetic agent, chloroform, in inducing anaesthesia. These advances resulted in a significant increase in the number of surgical procedures that doctors were able to perform and patients willing to submit to.

And, for all his disputes over who *really* discovered ether, there's no denying Morton's vital contribution. The epitaph on his grave reads: "Inventor and revealer of inhalation anaesthesia: before whom, in all time, surgery was agony; by whom pain in surgery was averted and annulled; since whom, science has control of pain." **H**

// Using ether in operations was scandalous: pain was supposed to aid healing and the sufferers' souls //



A 1907 re-enactment of WTG Morton's first public demonstration of ether in 1846. Using ether as an anaesthetic revolutionised surgery, with many more procedures being performed



Joanna Bourke is professor of history at Birkbeck, and author of *The Story of Pain* (OUP, 2014)

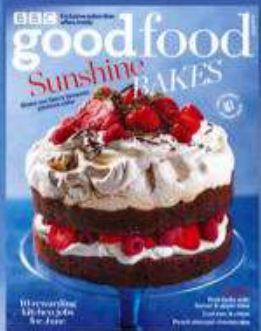
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HIDDEN HISTORIES

EMMA DABIRI explores lesser-known stories from our past

// Anarcha Westcott should be hailed as a 'mother of gynaecology' //

Anarcha Westcott was 17 years old when she gave birth. Although she is listed as a “mulatto” in the census, not a great deal is known about this enslaved woman’s

life in Alabama. But she should be hailed – along with two other enslaved women named Lucy and Betsey – as one of the “mothers of gynaecology”. Instead, we are much more familiar with the white, slave-owning “father of gynaecology”, Dr J Marion Sims.

Sims has not one, but three statues in his honour in the United States (although, in 2018, his Central Park monument was removed from view after public pressure). Largely erased from the narrative are the enslaved women he experimented on, women whose bodies provided the “resources” Sims needed for his research. It is through those experiments that his name entered the annals of the historical record. Yet he failed to record most of the enslaved women’s names, other than Anarcha, Lucy and Betsey. It was on Anarcha that his experimentation was most frequently carried out, conducting more than 30 operations, with no pain relief. These led him to “successfully” perform his surgery (Anarcha never fully recovered), making Sims’ technique the first treatment for vesicovaginal fistula. He revolutionised gynaecological surgery, cementing the legacy that so preoccupied him.

Enslaved women were bought to produce, and to reproduce. Yet, as is easy to imagine, being held in captivity did not facilitate a conducive environment for pregnancy

and labour. Brutal conditions, inadequate diet and insufficient shelter meant that poor health was endemic among enslaved people. Many suffered from rickets, which affected bone development. It’s very likely that Anarcha had a severe case of rickets caused by abuse, neglect and malnutrition. This could result in conditions such as a deformed pelvis, making it incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to give birth. In June 1845, Anarcha went into labour and spent three days desperately trying to give birth before the local physician, Sims, was called. This was not necessarily out of concern for Anarcha. Enslaved people only had “value” in so far as they could work, dead women couldn’t work, and obstructions to having children resulted in fewer workers.

After a tortuous labour (which probably ended in a stillbirth), Anarcha’s body was ravaged. Her ordeal left her with tears in her vagina and rectum, a condition known as vesicovaginal fistula and rectovaginal fistula. In addition to unimaginable pain, it causes incontinence and Anarcha suffered uncontrollable bowel movements, which in turn led to further complications, including ulcers on her vulva and thighs. Given the location of these conditions and the squeamishness of male doctors in treating women, no cures existed, but Sims saw Anarcha as a prime “specimen” for his investigations.

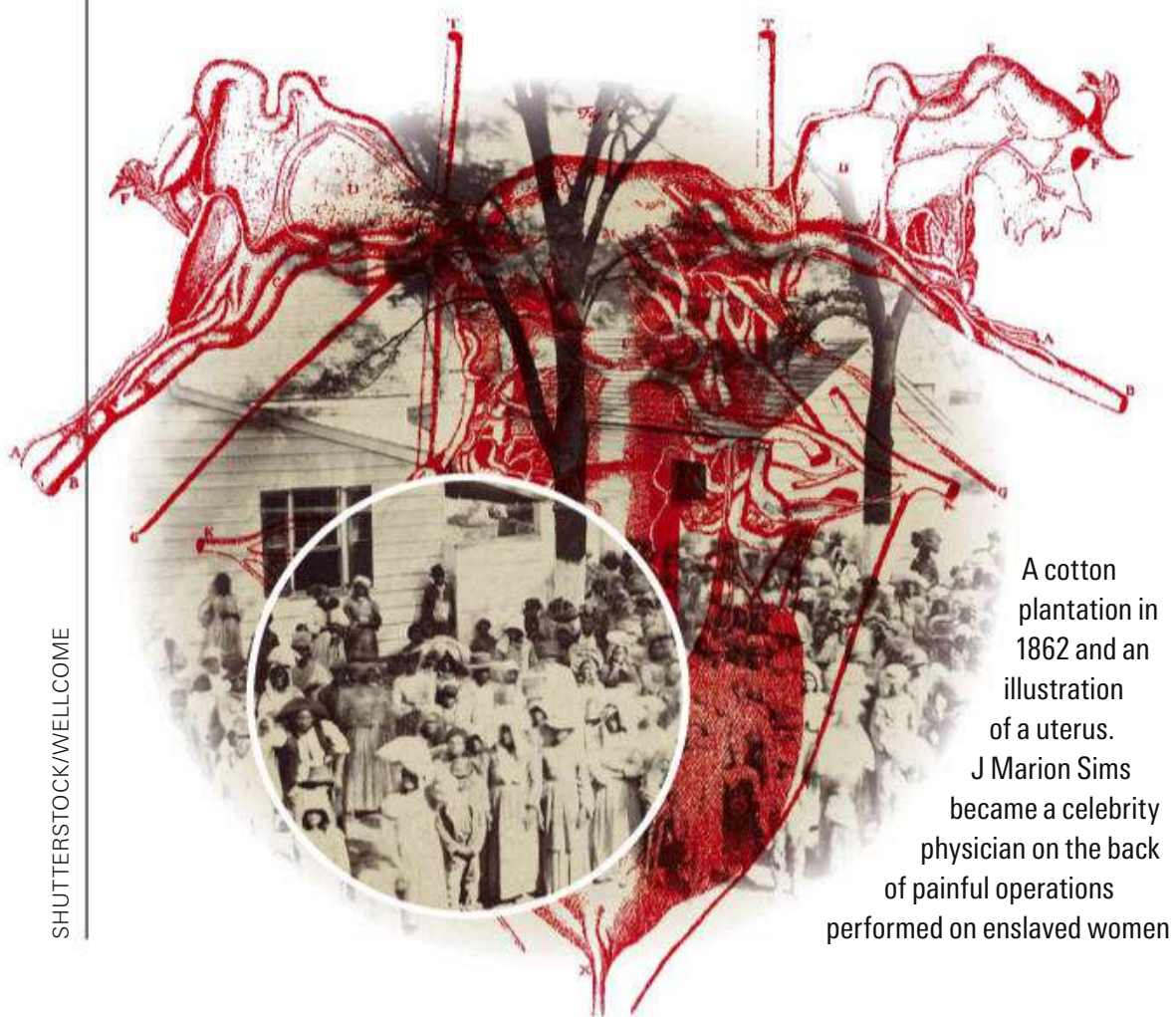
Sims was a man of ambition, who (according to JC Hallman, who has done extensive research on Anarcha) “settled on surgical innovation as the best path to a lucrative practice and a permanent legacy”. He subscribed to the common racist belief that African-Americans were both less intelligent than white people and less able to feel pain. These beliefs combined with his own ego to lead him to commit truly gruesome acts. For instance, convinced that “lock jaw” was caused by a mechanical issue, Sims used shoe making tools to pry enslaved children’s bones apart to “loosen” their skulls.

Initially opposed to treating women’s reproductive health, stating that he “hated investigating the organs of the female pelvis”, Sims later had a change of heart. While treating a white seamstress who had dislocated her pelvis, he made an observation that he thought he could test on Anarcha and the other enslaved women, allowing him to make history. His experiments also facilitated the invention of the vaginal speculum, still in use today.

Sims became an internationally lauded celebrity physician, performing on European empresses the techniques he had practised on enslaved women. And what of those women? Little is known, but a book on Anarcha’s life, *The Anarcha Quest: The Story of a Slave and a Surgeon*, based on Hallman’s research, is scheduled to be published next year. Hallman has also been part of the “More Up” campaign, which plans to erect a monument to Anarcha, Lucy and Betsey – long overdue recognition of the sacrifices made by the “mothers of gynaecology”. ■

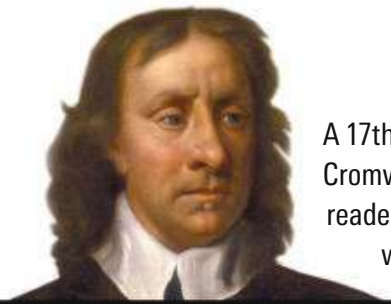
Emma Dabiri

is an author and broadcaster, and teaching fellow at SOAS University of London. Her most recent book is *What White People Can Do Next: From Allyship to Coalition* (Penguin, 2021)



A cotton plantation in 1862 and an illustration of a uterus.

J Marion Sims became a celebrity physician on the back of painful operations performed on enslaved women



A 17th-century portrait of Cromwell – whose behaviour, reader Jo Jones argues, was “quite monstrous”

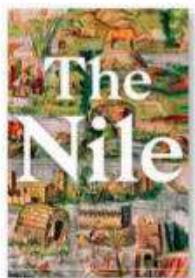
LETTER OF THE MONTH

Just not cricket

On reading your recent article about cricket (*Batting for the British Empire*, July) I was reminded of a story my father told about his Great Uncle Willy. This was deputy surgeon-general William G Don MD, who served on the *Duke of Wellington* in the Baltic during the 1855 bombardment of Sveaborg. In his printed but unpublished memoir *Reminiscences of the Baltic Fleet of 1855*, he tells how “the first few days in September were exceedingly fine; we made the most of them on shore in cricket matches and other amusements... On the 8th we played a grand cricket match – ‘the Duke’ v ‘The Fleet’ – and had the satisfaction of winning by 101 to 56 in one innings, being unable to pull off a second.”

When he recounted this to my father who was in hospital wounded in the second battle of Ypres in 1915, he added that the reason for no second innings was that the Russians, in an “ungentlemanly fashion”, had renewed firing towards the pitch on the sand bank! Clearly the Russians were not impressed with cricket...

Peter J Hood, Devon



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **The Nile: History's Greatest River** by Terje Tvedt. You can read our review of the book on page 79



A woman milks a cow in this 13th-century illustration. Researchers are questioning why few women took part in medieval revolts

Cromwellian contradictions

I enjoyed reading about Cromwell (*The Dark Truth About Oliver Cromwell*, August), but confess to finding Ronald Hutton's concluding paragraph a tad challenging. How is it possible for someone to be dishonest yet devout, vindictive yet adaptable, self-seeking (a liar) yet principled at the same time?

As a history teacher for more than 40 years, I found Cromwell's behaviour quite monstrous and was never comfortable with him as a topic – and that was without knowing much of the evidence explained in the article. Having read it, however, I feel my attitude somewhat vindicated.

Jo Jones, Darlington

The missing rebels

We are grateful to Laura Aitken-Burt for her comments (*Letters*, July) on our article on the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (May). The focus of the article was on rebels with military links, hence the predominance of men, but we would like to reassure Laura that we are actively researching the role of women in the revolt (for instance see our profile of Margery Tawney, an eyewitness to events at the Tower at 1381.online/people_and_places).

However, historians are agreed that one of the distinctive features of the rising of 1381 (and other medieval revolts) is the small numbers of women involved. The figure of 70 women rebels from Suffolk in 1381 is reported in the *Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (2nd ed, 1989) but unfortunately it is not clear that the legal cases brought against these women relate to the revolt. Generally, legal records relating to the rising rarely mention women. We are investigating the reasons for this. It may be that the commissions against the rebels were reluctant to act against women. Alternatively, there may have been cultural reasons that meant that medieval women tended not to join risings, something that seems to have changed in the early modern period.

Exploring the ways women engaged with risings like that of 1381 will help us better understand the position of women in medieval society.

The People of 1381

Research Team

1381.online

Religious violence

I read Imran Asin Hayat's letter in the August issue, referring to Marc Morris's feature on the adoption of Christianity by the Anglo-Saxons (June), with a feeling that it was attempting to downplay the violence

of the conversion process.

I live on the Isle of Wight where, according to Bede, conversion was achieved in AD 686 by Caedwalla of Wessex, being counselled by St Wilfrid. Bede says that Caedwalla “endeavoured to destroy all the inhabitants of Wightland and replace them with his own followers”. While he does not seem to have killed everyone, it was not a peaceful conversion for this particular British Isle! St Wilfrid, a major figure in the early Anglo-Saxon Church, was rewarded with a quarter of the island.

Nigel Phillips, Isle of Wight



Lise Meitner pictured c1910. Female scientists' work has long been overlooked, says reader Sigrid Morrison

Pushed to the sidelines

The article about Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (*The Scourge of Smallpox*, July) shows again how female writers, scientists, artists and medics have been ignored and sidelined by the male-dominated establishment. Writers such as George Eliot, the Brontës and many others had to write and be published under male pen names due to the stigma about books by women. Works by women scientists including Lise Meitner and Caroline Herschel were long downplayed by male colleagues, while Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, among others, had to fight for recognition in the medical world. Your article shone more light on these injustices.

Sigrid Morrison, Glasgow

Not set in stone

I was interested in August's *Talking Points* regarding the removal of the Cecil Rhodes statue – especially because, here in the US, we have debated the same issue.

Since nobody is without faults – sometimes despicable ones – we should ask: are they outweighed by this person's contribution to society? Most Americans choose to honour Washington and Jefferson despite their slave ownership because they did so much for our country's founding. Whether that's right or wrong cannot be answered to everyone's



Seventh-century king Caedwalla as depicted in a 16th-century mural. Reader Nigel Phillips highlights the king's role in the violent religious conversion of the Isle of Wight

satisfaction. My opinion and that of a black person might differ greatly.

Some people want Confederate statues to remain because they “teach history”, but I don’t agree. Statues are erected to honour, not teach, and honouring those who fought in a rebellion is tantamount to honouring the insurrectionists of 6 January of this year.

As there can never be agreement on whether a person’s positives outweigh the negatives, each country, city, or institution must decide for themselves.

Dan Kussart, Wisconsin

Bad medicine

Elinor Cleghorn’s feature (*The Gender Pain Gap*, August) reminded me that, as a child brought up in a pharmacy, I can remember seeing on the shelves a product called “Widow Welch’s Female Pills” as recently as the mid-1960s!

PJ Walter, Somerset

Initial misgivings

While enjoying M Underwood’s anecdote (*Letters*, August) about how far the Wehrmacht advanced in the early months of Barbarossa, I wondered if a German map would have shown “UdSSR” not “USSR” for Union der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken.

George Kirrin, Beckenham

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► Page 48



The word of God

A Bible reading at Chelsea workhouse, as depicted in a late 19th-century painting. Workhouses showed marked improvement over the decades, Peter Higginbotham claims



How gruelling was th



BRIDGEMAN

e workhouse?

Peter Higginbotham

argues that the Victorian institutions weren't necessarily the grim hell-holes portrayed by Charles Dickens

"Tory spending cuts send us back to the misery of the Victorian workhouse," cried a *Mirror* headline in 2010. Workhouses were "bleak, grimly austere and oppressive", wrote the author of a study of

one local institution in 2012. Ever since Dickens' *Oliver Twist* began publication in 1837, the establishment he described, and numerous on-screen representations of it, have become the filter through which the institution is invariably viewed. Portrayals of the workhouse habitually take it as read that it was unrelentingly horrific, harsh and dehumanising. But was it really that bad?

The Victorian workhouse first came about as a result of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. This act transferred the administration of poor relief from individual parishes to a coordinated national system based on new groupings of parishes, known as Poor Law Unions. Each union, run by a locally elected Board of Guardians, provided a workhouse to serve the whole union area. For the able-bodied destitute and their dependants, the workhouse was intended to be the only help on offer. The operation of the New Poor Law was overseen by a central authority – originally the Poor Law Commission (PLC), later the Poor Law Board (PLB) and then the Local Government Board (LGB).

It's often assumed that *Oliver Twist* was set in one of the new union workhouses, or "bastilles", as critics such as MP and journalist William Cobbett labelled them. However, it is clear that it was actually located in one of the pre-1834 parish-run establishments, where there was no uniformity in matters such as work or diet.

Everyone knows, of course, exactly what workhouse inmates had to eat: gruel. In Oliver's workhouse, there were "three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays". But, in the entire workhouse era, before or after 1834,

Victorian workhouses

there was never an establishment with such a diet on offer.

A typical parish workhouse menu was that at Westminster St Margaret, where breakfast was bread with either broth or gruel, and supper was bread with butter or cheese. Midday dinner could be meat and broth, pease pottage, baked puddings, or hasty pudding – oatmeal boiled in milk. In the 1830s, the lucky inmates of the Brighton workhouse received six meat dinners a week, with no limits on quantity, plus two pints of beer a day for the men or one pint for women and children. The inmates were served at table, with the governor carving for the men and boys, and the matron for the women and girls.

The new union workhouses had to adopt one of six standard dietaries issued by the PLC in 1835. Dietary No 1, for example, provided able-bodied men with a daily breakfast of bread and gruel, a dinner of either soup or, on three days a week, meat and potatoes, and a supper of bread and either cheese or broth. The elderly could exchange their gruel for a weekly ration of butter, tea and sugar.

Although this menu compared well to that typically consumed by poor labourers living outside the workhouse, the food was not without shortcomings. Ingredients purchased by workhouses were usually low grade and often suffered from adulteration. A report in 1866 revealed huge variations in the nutritional value of the same dish at different establishments. For instance, a pint of gruel at Scarborough workhouse contained 4 ounces of oatmeal, while at Easingwold it was just 1.5 ounces.

In 1883, in an effort to improve inmates' health, the LGB suggested that workhouse inmates be given a weekly cooked fish dinner. Although the experiment was successful in some places, such as Bristol, more typical were the reactions at Ludlow, where some inmates claimed that fish "disagreed" with them. In 1897, a trial of dietary improvements at Bethnal Green workhouse hit the headlines after an inmate was said to have died from overeating. From 1901, reflecting the fact that inmates were by then mostly the elderly or sick (and therefore had more limited appetites), workhouses could compile their own weekly menu from a list of approved dishes including treats such as Irish stew, pasties, shepherd's pie and roly-poly pudding, with an accompanying cookbook to ensure uniformity of ingredients and preparation.

Vermin-infested rags

Another common misconception is that the poor were "sentenced" to the workhouse. Entering a workhouse was essentially a voluntary decision, though many people's circumstances left them little option other than



Scrubbing up

A Hampshire workhouse laundry room, early 1900s. Some inmates arrived in vermin-infested rags, so issuing workhouse clothing was a practical measure



Helping the needy Bethnal Green workhouse in London (top) and the Leigh workhouse in Lancashire (bottom) were both part of a new national system of poor relief

Liquid lunch

Residents of a London workhouse drink beer on their annual outing to West Sussex, 1896. By the 1890s, many inmates enjoyed occasional day trips to the countryside or seaside



MARY EVANS/PETER HIGGINBOTHAM



Backbreaking work

A man stands in the stone yard in a Yorkshire workhouse. Splitting rocks was gradually replaced by easier labour

Workhouses could compile their own menu from a list of dishes including Irish stew, pasties, shepherd's pie and roly-poly pudding

to accept the offer of a place. The workhouse admission process included the issuing of workhouse clothing, which has sometimes been viewed as a deliberate strategy of dehumanisation. But for new inmates who arrived with just the clothes they stood in, possibly little more than vermin-infested rags, the provision of two sets of clean and serviceable clothes was a very practical – and often welcome – measure.

The clothing did, however, provide officials with a degree of control. Although inmates could discharge themselves at any time, subject to a few hours' notice, and have their own clothing returned to them, any unauthorised exit from the premises while wearing workhouse clothing could lead to a charge of stealing union property. For those who did decide to leave, there was no financial or other assistance in finding work or accommodation. Thus, to some degree, the workhouse could be viewed as a poverty trap.

For a group known as the "ins and outs", though, the workhouse clearly held no fear. Such individuals treated the institution like a free lodging house, staying for a few days or weeks at a time and then discharging themselves. During 1901, 81-year-old Julia Blumsun admitted herself into the City of London workhouse on 163 separate occasions. Other individuals appear to have positively preferred to live in a workhouse, such as the inmate of Leigh workhouse in Lancashire, who in 1922 was



SONGS, SEMOLINA AND SANTA CLAUS

Two previous inmates reflected on their time in the workhouse as children

"WE MADE OUR OWN FUN"

In 1916, after a year in the Steyning workhouse, four-year-old John Austin began an 11-year stay in the union's children's home at Shoreham-by-Sea, which he called "the orphanage". In memoirs recorded by his daughter, Pat Mathewson, he would later recall: "We made our own fun. One of the things I really enjoyed was being a member of the local church choir. Apart from the fact that I could go out of the orphanage without supervision, which was a great relief, I also got paid pocket money for singing my little head off." He got plenty of exercise, too: "A very kind gesture was made by the two Box brothers of Brighton when they supplied a complete set of gymnastic equipment. They also spent at least one night a week teaching us. I did well and in 1926 was Sussex Junior Champion."

He reflected that some of his friends who didn't live in the workhouse were less fortunate: "I had one school friend who didn't come from the orphanage, and when I visited his home I began to think that perhaps the orphanage wasn't so bad after all. His home was poor, and he often had nothing to eat all day. It was a shock to me: it was not as I imagined an ordinary family home should be."



Children dance around the maypole at the Hackney Union cottage homes, 1913. Some recreation was on offer to them

As a boy John Austin lived in the workhouse at Steyning, West Sussex (shown, below, in the 1950s)

"WE WERE REGIMENTED LIKE THE ARMY"

In 1925, four-year-old William Golding was placed in the Southampton workhouse children's homes at Shirley Warren. He recalled: "The first home was Oaklands children's home. It was from age four to eight. Then you went into another home – it was a cottage-type home with about ten children. It was a lot better. You stayed there from eight till twelve."

From the ages of 12 to 16, children lived in "the Big House, where there was about 70 of us. We were regimented like the army – bugle in the morning and bugle at night." But it had its upsides, according to William: "It wasn't too bad. Roly-poly pudding, you know, and the only thing that didn't go down well was semolina. We had an annual retreat into the New Forest. One year, we went to Stonehenge. We went to the local gasworks. And every year in the second home you had a trip to see Father Christmas. We got no toys, but when you saw Father Christmas you got a bottle of hair oil, or something they wanted to get rid of."





Bright futures

Boys wash laundry at the Chelmsford workhouse, c1890. Children in the workhouses received “a careful training in religion and industry”

discovered to have £500 in the bank.

One group for whom the workhouse did attempt to provide a route out of poverty was children. Since Elizabethan times, pauper children had been placed into apprenticeships as part of the poor relief system. Although the impression given by the 1968 film *Oliver!* is that workhouse boys were “for sale”, this was not the case – in reality, their new masters were paid a premium for taking them on. However, by the late 1830s, there was growing evidence of apprentices being exploited or abused by tradesmen whose only interest was the premium. A report in 1842 found that the boys apprenticed as mine workers by the Dewsbury Board of Guardians included five-year-old Thomas Townend, though he was returned after 16 days.

To replace apprenticeships, James Kay-Shuttleworth, an assistant poor law commissioner, proposed giving such children “a careful training in religion and industry”, with instruction in skills such as carpentry, shoe-making and tailoring or, for girls, domestic work, making them employable in adult life. The training could either be within the workhouse or, ideally, in separate accommodation, to remove children from the “contamination” of adult paupers. A number of unions set up their own separate schools or jointly operated district schools, some housing hundreds of children. In 1850, Charles Dickens visited

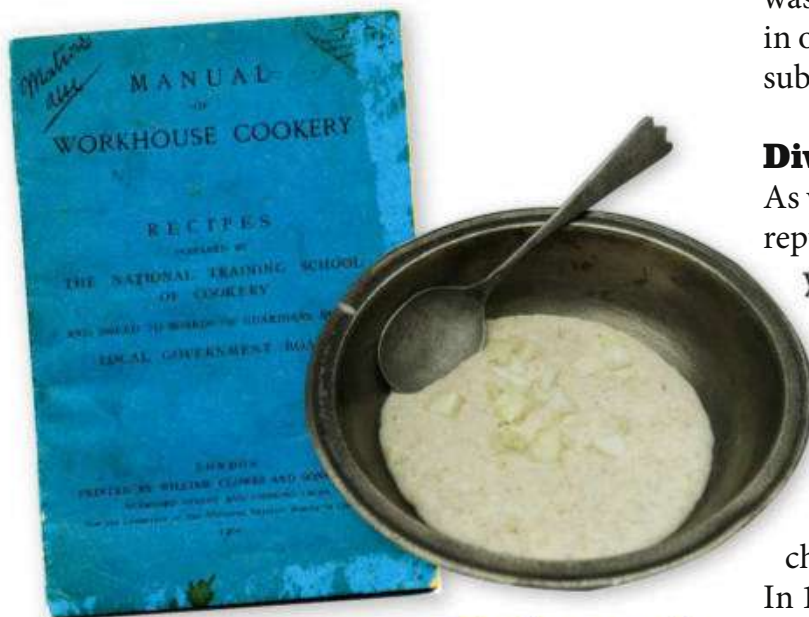
Opponents of the New Poor Law particularly criticised the separation of husbands and wives, and of parents and children

one such school, at Norwood, and wrote that its inmates might leave the establishment “almost with the certainty of becoming good and prosperous citizens”. However, such institutions began to attract criticism as being impersonal and serving as breeding grounds for disease.

From the 1870s, “cottage homes” developments became popular. These placed children in purpose-built miniature rural villages, complete with a school, chapel, hospital, laundry and workshops, with family-style groups of 10 to 20 children living in each “cottage” under the care of a house mother. From the 1890s, the family-group principle was transplanted to “scattered homes” based in ordinary houses placed around the suburbs of larger towns.

Divided families?

As well as the influence of *Oliver Twist*, the reputation of the union workhouse in its early years was assaulted by anti-Poor Law sections of the press which publicised any negative story about the institution, no matter how dubious its origins. Opponents of the New Poor Law particularly criticised the separation of husbands and wives and of parents and children required by union workhouses. In 1843, after an infant at Bethnal Green workhouse was reportedly removed from its mother except when being breastfed, *Punch* published a cartoon titled *The “Milk” of Poor Law “Kindness”*, showing a baby being torn



Glorious gruel

The 1901 *Manual of Workhouse Cookery* included many approved dishes, such as gruel (right), which was commonly served as part of breakfast



Creature comforts Elderly female inmates relax in the dayroom at Wellingborough Union workhouse, early 1900s. Throughout the country, older inmates had extra rations, and their wards were well furnished

from its mother's arms. In fact, workhouse regulations allowed children under seven to reside in the female wards and their mothers to have access to them at all reasonable times. In theory, a parent could request a daily "interview" with their child, although a common arrangement was for parents to have time with their children on Sunday afternoons.

Separation of men and women was said to be enforced for reasons of "discipline". Since many workhouses had just two live-in staff (the master and matron), the measure no doubt assisted the management of such institutions. Husbands and wives both over 60 could request a separate sleeping apartment, but the provision of such facilities varied widely.

"Unclimbable" fences

Yet inmates still managed to find ways around the restrictions. In 1905, to clamp down on such activities, Steyning workhouse installed "unclimbable" fencing between the men's and women's yards. After it became clear that inmates were still somehow managing to arrange secret trysts, an inquiry discovered that the male and female sides of the workhouse were communicating by using the general letter post. On one occasion, some resourceful female inmates at the Ross workhouse dressed themselves in men's

Some aged poor now had brightly decorated wards with comfortable furniture, and were even able to keep their own small pets

clothing and got into the men's ward.

Until the 1870s, a workhouse could be an unfortunate place to fall ill. Workhouse infirmaries were often cramped and poorly ventilated, and nursing was mostly carried out by elderly female inmates who, like Mrs Gamp in Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit*, were often illiterate and frequently drunk. Such nurses typically received a daily ration of beer and no doubt dipped into items such as brandy and porter that were often prescribed for patients.

There were exceptions, though. After Dickens visited the Liverpool workhouse infirmary in 1860, he recorded that "all the

arrangements of the wards were excellent. They could not have been more humane, sympathising, gentle, attentive, or wholesome." In the 1860s, a major campaign to improve medical facilities in London's workhouses gradually led to the widespread provision of new infirmary buildings and employment of trained nurses, something in which Florence Nightingale was influential. And from the 1880s, workhouse infirmaries increasingly provided treatment for non-inmates who couldn't afford to pay for the services of a doctor, effectively becoming local hospitals for the poor.

Taking a long view, the toughest time for workhouse inmates was probably in the first three decades of the New Poor Law, when the focus was on deterring able-bodied men from claiming poor relief. By the 1890s, however, things had changed considerably. Inmates able to work were more likely to be occupied in gardening or chopping firewood, or something related to their own trade, rather than the stone-breaking and oakum picking of earlier times.

The elderly often received a weekly ration of smoking tobacco or snuff and were provided with books and newspapers. At Macclesfield workhouse, the "respectable" aged poor now had brightly decorated wards with comfortable furniture. They could wear their own clothes, retain a few of their own possessions, keep small pets, were served afternoon tea, and could go out to visit friends each day. By 1914, the older inmates at the Ross workhouse had mixed dayrooms and individual cubicles in their dormitories. Fixed meal-times had been abandoned, and inmates even had weekly trips to the cinema.

Despite popular perceptions, the regime and physical conditions in workhouses evolved enormously over the years. For many people, though, that was irrelevant. It was the overwhelming shame and stigma that had become associated with entering the workhouse that meant they would rather die than pass through its doors. **H**

MARY EVANS

Peter Higginbotham is the author of *The Workhouse Encyclopedia* (The History Press, 2014). He has also appeared on our podcast, as an expert on workhouses for our Everything You Wanted to Know series. historyextra.com/podcast

➤ To read our **recipe for roly-poly pudding**, taken from the **1901 Manual of Workhouse Cookery**, turn to page 90

LISTEN

An episode of **In Our Time** focuses on the Poor Laws: bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0001m73

BBC RADIO





Flashpoint A protester at a "Patriots' Day" rally in Berkeley, California, April 2017

How the far right hijacked the ancient world

Classical Greece and Rome have long been co-opted into the politics of race hate. Historians cannot be in denial about this

BY **KATHERINE HARLOE**

Accompanies Katherine Harloe's BBC Radio 4 documentary **Detoxifying the Classics**



In August 2017, TV news reports were filled with images of far-right, white nationalist protesters marching through Charlottesville, Virginia. This was the so-called “Unite the Right Rally”, called to oppose the

taking down of a statue of Confederate general Robert E Lee. Crowds of white supremacists marched through the streets, carrying torches and chanting “White lives matter” and “You will not replace us”. The next day they attacked counter-protesters. One murdered an anti-fascist demonstrator, Heather Heyer, by running her over in his car.

In January 2021, history seemed to repeat itself as a political demonstration with white nationalist elements in the United States again turned violent. This time, a crowd of Donald Trump supporters, arguably encouraged by the outgoing president himself, attempted to storm the Federal United States Capitol to disrupt the counting of Electoral College votes to confirm Joe Biden’s victory in the 2020 US presidential election. The Congress session was suspended when rioters entered the building; politicians were locked down in offices for hours. Five people died and more than 100 were injured. It is alleged that some among the crowd aimed to assassinate the US vice-president, Mike Pence.

One parallel between these two spectacles of political violence may have eluded non-specialists. Alongside other white supremacist flags and symbols, many among the far-right demonstrators in both episodes chose to advertise their allegiance to racist and ethnonationalist values by brandishing classical insignia. A poster the organisers of “Unite the Right” produced to advertise their rally included SPQR (Senatus Populusque Romanus), an abbreviation associated with the Roman republic and empire but also enthusiastically revived by Mussolini’s Fascist regime. Meanwhile, a headline speaker at the rally – who subse-

quently ran for election to the United States Senate – goes by the name “Augustus Sol Invictus”.

To these symbols the Capitol insurrectionists added Roman costumes, Corinthian helmets and flags bearing the Greek inscription “ΜΟΛΩΝ ΛΑΒΕ” (“come and take them”) – words supposedly spoken by the Spartan king Leonidas at Thermopylae, in response to the Persian demand that his 300 soldiers surrender their weapons. One protester even carried an image of Trump’s head superimposed onto the body of Maximus from the film *Gladiator*, urging Trump to copy Caesar and “Cross the Rubicon” – that is, to overthrow the republic.

White nationalists and neo-Fascists like those who marched in Charlottesville and Washington clearly draw inspiration from the 20th-century history of Fascist and National Socialist appropriations of Greek and Roman imagery. Adolf Hitler’s delight in the Discobolos, an iconic Greco-Roman sculpture of a discus-thrower, is well documented, while Mussolini’s regime revived the imagery of the Roman *fascies* (a symbol depicting a bound bundle of wooden rods and an axe) and engraved SPQR on public buildings.

But the attachment of racist thought to the classics is not just a matter of superficial symbolism; nor is it confined to the most obvious and overt, extreme, even terrorist, groups. The Pharos project, a website that tracks and contests the use of Greek and Roman material by far-right hate groups, has uncovered a thriving online community of far-right “thought leaders” who engage in detailed, pseudo-scholarly debates over questions such as the colour of Achilles’ hair as described in the *Iliad*, the myth of a Dorian or Aryan invasion of the Mediterranean from the north, or whether the fall of the Roman empire can indeed be attributed to immigration.

Above all, such groups are motivated by the desire to vindicate a false image of the ancient Greeks and Romans as a “white race”, who occupied the territory of Europe continuously from ancient times and whose innate, biological and psychological characteristics laid the ground for their allegedly superior culture and their natural right to dominate others.

Within these groups, a false image of the Greek and Roman world is being deployed to lay the groundwork for a politics of overt race hate. But this image of the ancient world as a white space is not confined to the fringes – and it is certainly not just a US phenomenon.

Similar dynamics to those at work in Charlottesville were evident this side of the Atlantic in a furore over a children’s cartoon, which also came to a head in August 2017. In December 2016, the BBC had published a short, animated film on YouTube as the latest in a series of resources on “The Story of Britain”, created to support the National Curriculum in history. Titled “Life in Roman Britain”, the cartoon narrated the story of a young Roman boy, Quintus, who loses, then recovers, his father’s *focale*, or military scarf. The furore arose not because of this seemingly anodyne plotline, but because of how the family was portrayed. For, while Quintus’s mother was depicted as light-skinned enough to be racially

“One banner urged Donald Trump to copy Julius Caesar and ‘Cross the Rubicon’ – that is, to overthrow the American republic



Status symbol Mussolini's Fascist regime appropriated Roman imagery— such as the *fascies* (bound bundles of wooden rods and axes) – as seen on this 1931 carving on Milan train station



Grim model Adolf Hitler with a statue of Discobolos. Modern far-right groups that cleave to classical imagery have taken their inspiration from the ideologies of the 20th century

indeterminate, both he and his father – a Roman army commander – were dark-skinned Africans.

The image of a prosperous, black family with lighter-skinned household slaves prompted a public backlash. Reactions ranged from scorn to outright hostility. One prominent online figure on the far right, as well as ordinary members of the public, accused the BBC of rewriting history to serve a politically correct agenda.

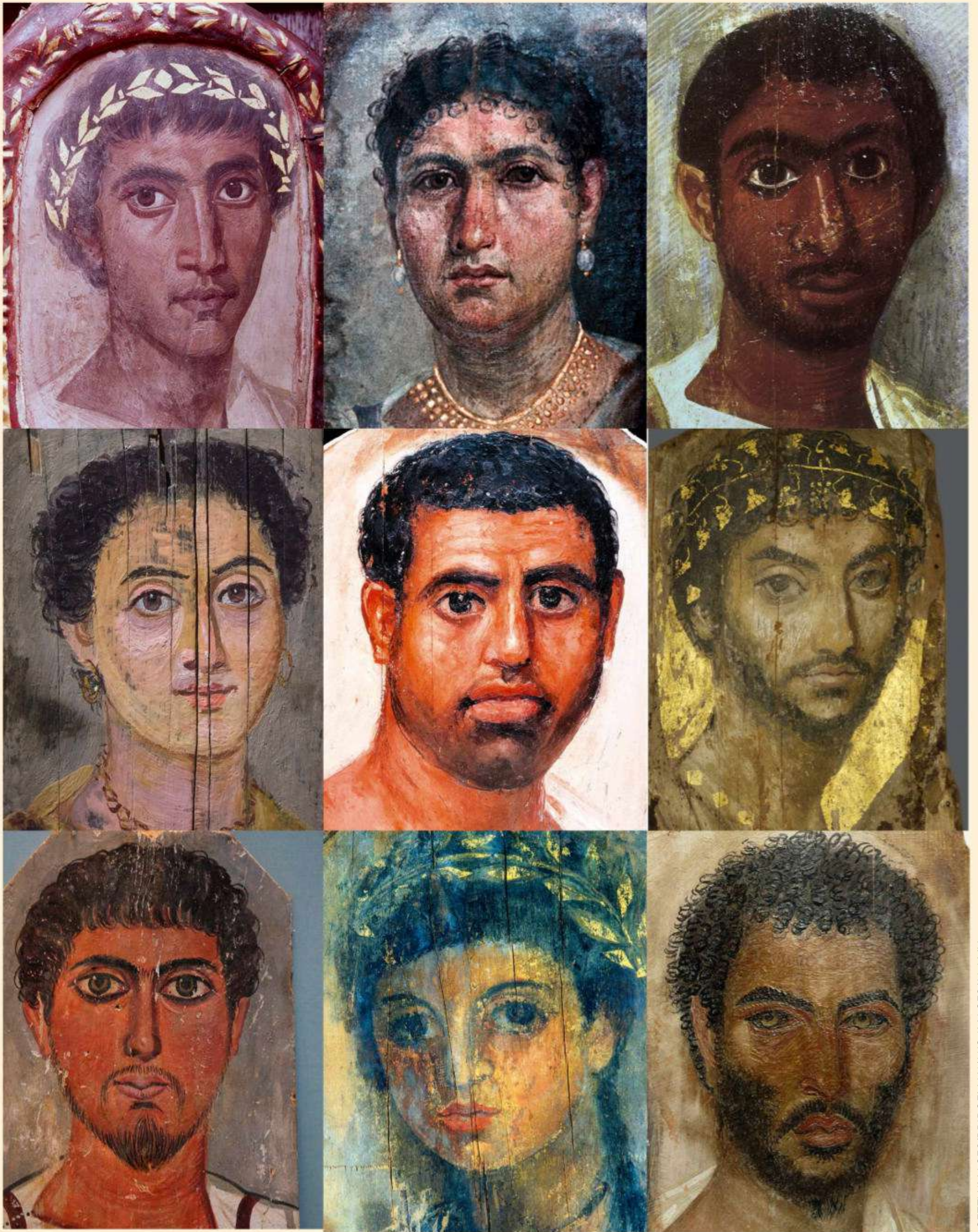
There is nothing at all implausible about the cartoon's depiction of an African commander in the Roman army. Writing tablets and inscriptions recovered from Vin-dolanda, a Roman fort near Hadrian's Wall, show that the soldiers stationed there hailed not just from Gaul and Spain, but also from north-west Africa and Syria, while the studies of mitochondrial DNA and dental isotopes from burials confirm that the inhabitants of Roman Britain included high-status individuals of African descent. It's also correct that the ancient Greek and Roman world was a multi-ethnic space. The resistance to this depiction of a Romano-British family was nevertheless so strong that when the Cambridge historian Mary Beard observed on social media that the cartoon's depiction was perfectly possible, her comments were met with open derision.

The denial and anger that met attempts, by Beard and other experts, to assert the truth about the multi-ethnic character of Roman Britain revealed an investment to an

image of the past as a white space and white possession that has affinities with the picture promoted by far-right hate groups. Public reactions to the cartoon, and to efforts at expert commentary, suggest that the problem is not just one of ignorance of the truth about the Greek and Roman worlds, but also emotional attachment to a false image of an ethnically and culturally homogeneous “white” European past. To respond to this by attempting simply to portray “the facts” about Roman Britain is to miss the point.

To understand properly what is at stake in such episodes it is necessary to examine the processes of historical myth-making that led to this false image being created, and the needs – emotional, social and political – it continues to serve today.

I've already noted that the Roman empire was multi-ethnic in character. By the second century AD it stretched from Hispania (Spain) in the west to Mesopotamia in the east, encompassing all the coastal regions of the Mediterranean, Egypt and Judea. Alexander the Great's conquests in Bactria had led to Greek communities settling as far east as modern-day Afghanistan and Tajikistan. These were lands connected by conquest and subjugation as well as trade and diplomacy, and the Greeks and Romans certainly engaged in ethnic stereotyping of other peoples. But you will search in vain in their literary, historical and ethnographic writings for evidence that they



Facing the truth Nine mummy portraits depicting residents of Roman Egypt, with a variety of skin tones. “Material and visual sources tell the same story: figural representations from the Roman period show a variety of skin tones in individuals of elite status,” writes Katherine Harloe

considered themselves a “white race” to be distinguished from others on the basis of skin colour. Material and visual sources tell the same story: figural representations from the Roman period, whether we think of Italian frescoes or Egyptian mummy portraits, show a variety of skin tones in individuals of elite status.

So, if not in the ancient world, when did the theory of racial difference in terms of “black” and “white” skin first emerge? It’s a complex issue, and a full account would need to re-trace how ethnic associations were built upon notions of black and white indicating misfortune and good fortune, sin and innocence, that have roots in antiquity and the Middle Ages. One particularly important context is, however, the European colonisation of the Americas from the late 15th century, when the system of plantation slavery brought about a stratification of population among colour lines.

It is in British colonial Barbados that the first substantial evidence for the codification of this form of racial difference emerges, when the House of Assembly passed a pair of laws in 1661 that set out different legal provisions for the regulation of two groups of people. The first group was “servants” – indentured bondspeople, usually of English, Scottish or Irish ancestry, working out time-limited periods of servitude. The second was “Negroes” and “Indians” – enslaved Africans and Indigenous people, whose servitude endured in perpetuity (even extending to their children) and who had no recourse to law.

In addition to establishing different regimes of control and punishment for “Christians” and “Negros”, the Barbados codes introduced a bounty for anyone who caught and punished (by whipping) a runaway slave. This legislation opened up a social and legal divide between enslaved black people and their indentured white counterparts who worked alongside them on plantations, incentivising the latter to act in solidarity with the planter class. These legal codes were adopted, with adaptations, in the legislation of other British colonies, such as Jamaica. It was here that the Servant Act of 1681 first replaced the term “Christian” – used in Barbados to describe the free, master class – with the non-religious descriptor “white”.

In constructing an intellectual infrastructure to support this notion of racialised difference, European and American thinkers turned to the classical tradition. Particularly useful to this end was Aristotle, whose definition of the good as *eudaimonia* (“happiness”) is one fundamental source for the “pursuit of happiness” when it was cited as one of three inalienable rights in the United States Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Jefferson, third American president, slave owner and author of this phrase, is invoked approvingly by some classicists today for his eloquent defence of a liberal education centred around Greek, Latin and ancient history as the ideal way to exercise and stretch the mental and moral powers of free citizens. In the same chapter of

Notes on the State of Virginia (1781) devoted to these constitutional provisions, Jefferson proposes that enslaved Africans should be emancipated, deported and replaced by white settlers, since “the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or other race”.

Jefferson’s mention of “the real distinctions which nature has made” hints at a distinction outlined by Aristotle in one of his canonical works. In the first book of his *Politics*, the revered fourth-century BC philosopher asserted that slavery was an institution that existed “by nature”, since nature (*physis*) has distinguished humankind into ruler or master (*despotes*) and slave (*doulos*).

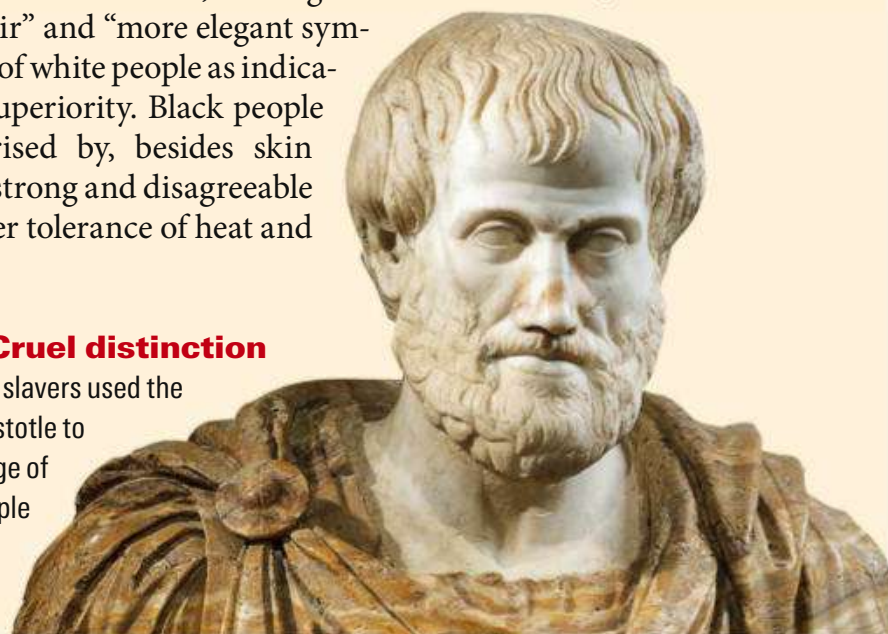
Aristotle admitted that circumstances such as the taking of prisoners of war might result in those who possess innate nobility (*eugeneia*) being enslaved. He was also troubled by the impossibility of distinguishing “natural” slaves from “natural” masters by physical signs. But these equivocations did not prevent pro-slavery advocates in the antebellum United States from invoking his authority for a racialised distinction between the free and the enslaved. Aristotle’s definition of a slave as “a piece of property possessing a soul” – and his arguments about the justice of enslaving those whose reasoning faculties were, allegedly, by nature deficient – provided American planters with a conveniently authoritative justification for the institution of chattel slavery.

The doctrine of the “physical and moral” causes, as Jefferson phrased it, that distinguished black and white people played a fundamental role in classical art theory and the study of art history in the 18th century. Among the supposed physical and behavioural traits that distinguished those of European and those of African descent, he singled out the “flowing hair” and “more elegant symmetry of form” of white people as indications of their superiority. Black people were characterised by, besides skin colour, “a very strong and disagreeable odour”, a greater tolerance of heat and

“ You will search in vain for evidence that the ancient Romans and Greeks considered themselves a “white race” to be distinguished on the basis of skin colour

Cruel distinction

American slavers used the writings of Aristotle to justify the bondage of black people



of hard labour, and reflective, rational and imaginative capacities judged to be deficient by comparison with those of their white counterparts.

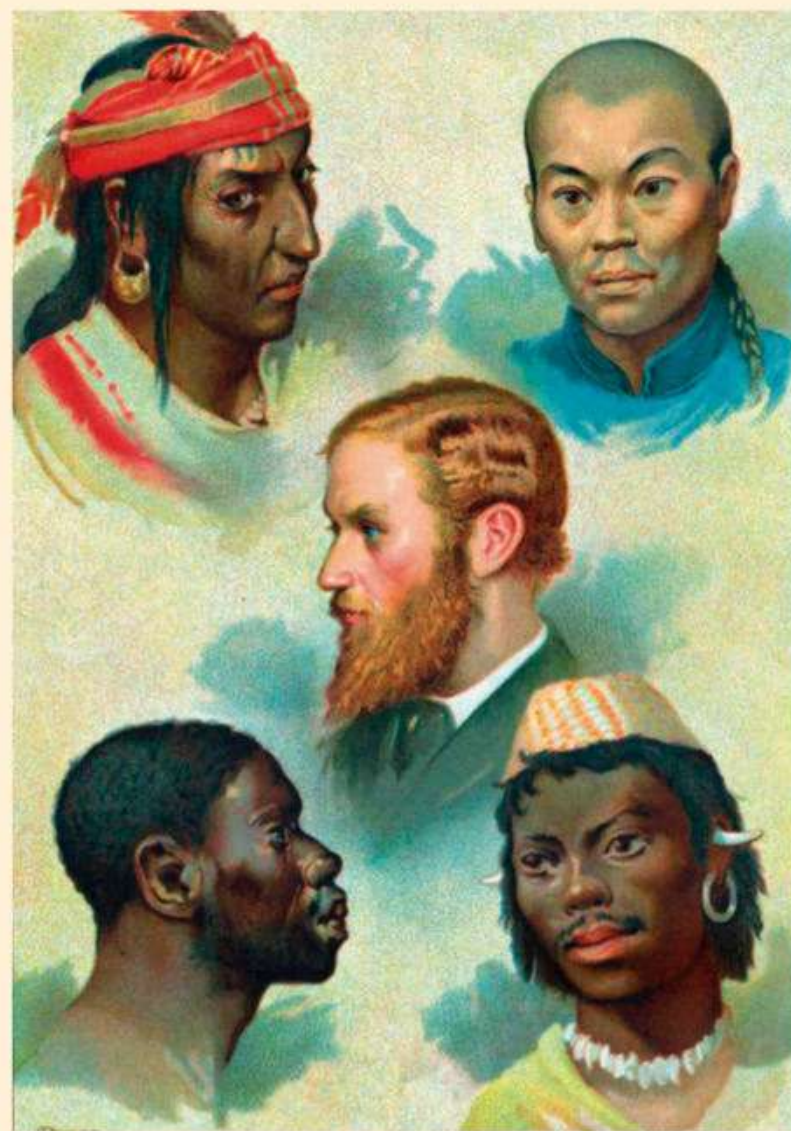
Such comparisons, the stock-in-trade of natural history of the time, had also been applied in the study of classical art history to furnish explanations of the alleged superiority of ancient Greek culture over that of other peoples. In the writings of the 18th-century archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the supposed cultural and intellectual achievements of different ancient peoples are attributed to a complicated mixture of environmental, social and intellectual characteristics, and correlated with behavioural and physical characteristics, including the shape of the faces and eyes. In the “Greek” profile of heads represented on ancient coins, as well as some of the most famous extant Greco-Roman statues, Winckelmann saw an example of the highest ideal of humanity, casting physical beauty as a reflection or echo of a civilisational superiority. Here is an attempt, literally, to read mental, intellectual and moral capacities from a face.

Winckelmann’s analyses of art and the cultural suppositions that underlay them were taken up and developed by the proponents of fully fledged “scientific” racism of the 19th century. The Edinburgh surgeon Robert Knox incorporated analysis of Greek sculpture into his popular travelling lecture series, in which he propounded a hierarchy of European racial types, with the ancient Greeks and Saxons at the top and the “Russ” (roughly Slavic peoples inhabiting areas of Russia and the Balkans) at the bottom. Knox’s arguments relied on a combination of ethnographic reporting, visual analysis of material culture and of facial/head shape, and even exhibited non-European people as living props to his lectures. Apparent in his lectures, too, was a troubling tendency to interpret political conflicts between different groups in racial terms, treating the nationalist struggle in Ireland, or the colonisation of Africa, as ineliminable racial conflicts between “Saxons” and lesser races, which can only end in one race exterminating the other.

Knox’s ideas were contested publicly by critics in his own time. Today we can easily recognise them as the progenitors of genocidal racial thought, but they entered the mainstream of European thinking and remain a potent combination. White supremacist groups sometimes appeal directly to these traditions of scholarship.

Echoes of pseudoscientific racial thinking can also still be caught in some people’s self-description as “Caucasian” – a term coined by the an-

“ The “Greek” heads represented humanity’s highest ideal, casting physical beauty as an echo of civilisational superiority



Superiority complex A 19th-century print showing the five “types” of human, based on the work of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach who believed Europeans the “most handsome and becoming”

thropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) to define the skull and facial shape of Europeans, whom he considered the “most handsome and becoming” of humankind. They are also evident in concerns about racial and cultural mixing, the claim that the “fall” of the Roman empire was attributable to immigration, or the notion of fifth-century Athens being the site of a “Greek miracle” – a society that, thanks to its sublime art and commitment to democracy, witnessed a political and cultural flowering that laid the foundations for a continuous “western civilisation”.

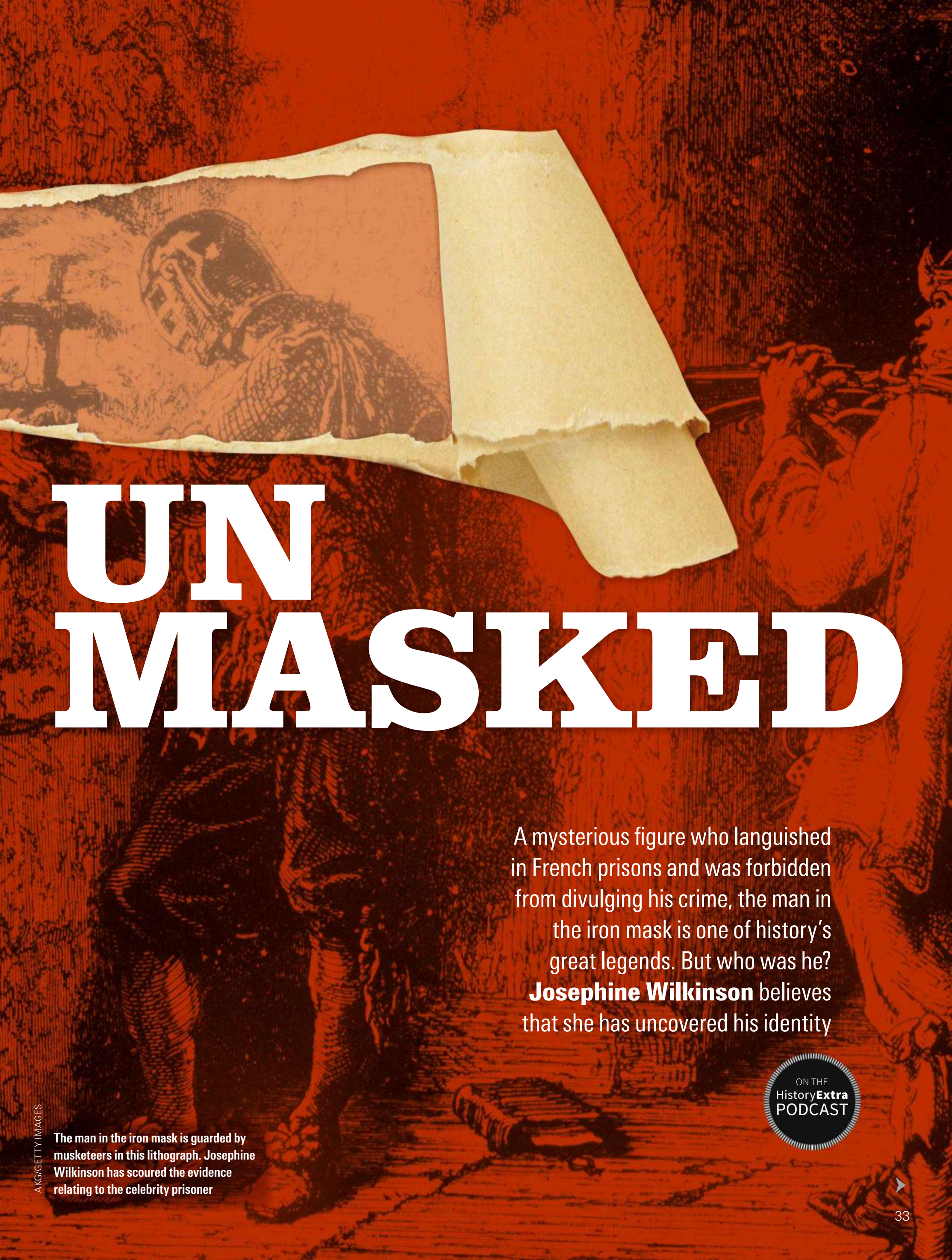
Few scholars working in classics and ancient history today would profess these doctrines in their own research and writings. But we are sometimes more acquiescent than we ought to be in the face of their circulation in public culture, fearing perhaps that counteracting the long-standing veneration of the Greek and Roman past will weaken our subject’s popularity. However, these false ideas have serious real-world consequences. While presenting the Greek and Roman past in its full complexity will always be insufficient to counter hate, it is the least part of our responsibility as historians to do so. **H**

Katherine Harloe is a professor of classics at the University of Reading. You can listen to her BBC Radio 4 documentary *Detoxifying the Classics* at BBC Sounds: bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000x72t

BBC
RADIO



ALAMY



UN MASKED

A mysterious figure who languished in French prisons and was forbidden from divulging his crime, the man in the iron mask is one of history's great legends. But who was he? **Josephine Wilkinson** believes that she has uncovered his identity

AKG/GETTY IMAGES

The man in the iron mask is guarded by musketeers in this lithograph. Josephine Wilkinson has scoured the evidence relating to the celebrity prisoner



The man in the iron mask

“**C**all me accursed!” The man whose voice was almost drowned out by the storm was dressed entirely in black, “a sort of phantom, his head covered with a black helmet and a black mask, something terrible to behold”. In his 1850 epic book, *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*, Alexandre Dumas created a captivating image of the man in the iron mask that would go on to inspire countless films and cement the mysterious figure’s place in popular culture.

Dumas was inspired by a legend that had emerged almost two centuries earlier. It told the story of a mysterious prisoner who had been arrested and secretly imprisoned in France. He had spent decades in various dark and damp dungeons, ending up in the Bastille. Closely guarded, he was kept in solitude where no one could overhear what he might have to say, and he was not allowed even to speak his name. He was guarded by a gaoler who was ordered to kill him if he spoke of anything other than his needs. The gaoler, nevertheless, showed great respect to this prisoner, even standing, hat in hand, in his presence. For, in Dumas’ story, this was not just any prisoner: he was one of the highest-born men in the land.

According to the legend (and Dumas’ tale), the prisoner was forced to wear an iron mask over his face to hide his identity, and two musketeers stood ready to kill him if he ever it took off. Why he had been imprisoned was a state secret, and after his death his cell was scrubbed and scraped, its miserable furnishings destroyed in case he had written his name in a hidden place.

Twisted family secret

Another man who was intrigued by this legend was the French writer Voltaire, who looked into tales of the prisoner and the horrific mask he had apparently been made to wear. He found out that, far from being a story, the man in the iron mask had really existed – he was a prisoner who lived at the time of Louis XIV (reigned 1643–1715), who was known as the Sun King.

Voltaire speculated there was only one reason why an unknown prisoner would have to hide his face: he resembled the only man who would be instantly recognisable to all Frenchmen, the Sun King himself. Voltaire concluded the prisoner must have been King Louis’ secret twin, who had been imprisoned to preserve the security of the kingdom.

This twin theory inspired Alexandre Dumas, who incorporated it into the elaborate plot of *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*. Largely as a result of Dumas’ tale and the films it later



A 1701 portrait of King Louis XIV. Voltaire claimed that the man in the iron mask was the king’s twin, a theory popularised by Alexandre Dumas in his epic novel

Two musketeers apparently stood ready to kill the prisoner if he ever took off his mask



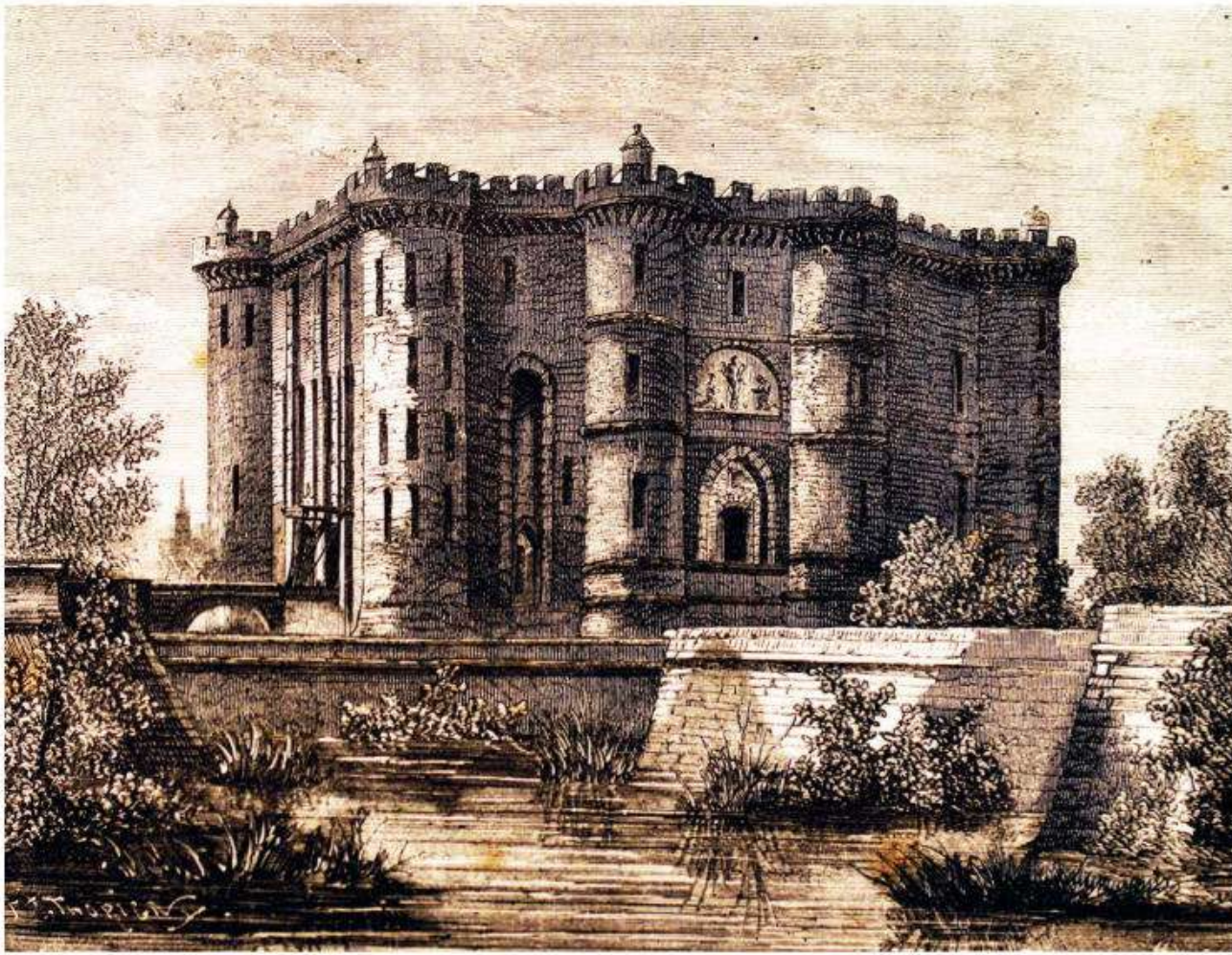
The cover of Alexandre Dumas’ *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*, which helped grow the legend of the man in the iron mask

spawned, the legend of the man in the iron mask has intrigued people for many years.

However, the true story is starkly different from the tale that Dumas penned. After poring through letters sent between King Louis XIV, the French minister for war Louvois, and a gaoler called Saint-Mars, I have come to the conclusion that the man in the iron mask was most likely a lowly prisoner named Eustache. While there is no smoking gun, the accumulation of evidence in this cache of letters points strongly to him.

What’s more, he didn’t permanently wear an iron mask – this was an invention of Voltaire, who wrote that the prisoner wore “a mask, the chin-piece of which had steel springs to enable [him] to eat while wearing it”. There is no historic basis for this, however. In reality, Eustache was only made to wear a mask – made of black velvet, not iron – in the later years of his life, and only when he might have been seen by onlookers.

The theory that the man in the iron mask was Eustache was first put forward by Jules Lair, a French lawyer-turned-historian, in 1890. However, it was rejected by many historians because Eustache was deemed not interesting or important enough – they



A depiction of the Bastille. This was the last prison Eustache was kept in, until his death in 1703. His gaoler Saint-Mars was told to kill him “if he spoke to me or anyone else of anything other than of his needs”

thought, as Voltaire and Dumas did, that the man in the iron mask had to be someone of significance, so the search continued.

But there is no real reason why a lowly prisoner couldn't have been the man in the iron mask. Before discussing the reason for Eustache's imprisonment, we need to know his story. It begins in late July 1669, when Louis XIV issued a *lettre de cachet*, an order for the arrest of a man named Eustache, who was to be captured on sight and taken to the fortress of Pignerol in the Italian Alps.

The terrible – and often bizarre – treatment he endured while imprisoned was remarkably similar to that in Dumas' fictional retelling of the story: he was held under conditions of utmost secrecy and his gaoler, a former sergeant in the musketeers called Saint-Mars, ensured that he could not be seen nor heard by anyone. Once a day, Saint-Mars dropped a meagre package of food on to the floor of his cell. And, if Eustache attempted to speak of anything but his most basic needs, Saint-Mars was to kill him, an order he declared he was ready to carry out: “If he spoke to me or anyone else of anything other than of his needs, I would run him through with my sword.”

A lowly valet

However, here Dumas' version of events in *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* veers away from the truth. Far from being the king's secret twin, or even a prisoner of high rank, Eustache was instead described by Louvois as “only a valet”.

In 17th-century France, a person's rank was preserved even in prison. As a valet,

Eustache was of lowly status, and this was reflected in the paltry items provided for his use. He was given cheap clothes: as Louvois stated, garments for “these sorts of people” should last three or four years. By contrast, Saint-Mars' other state prisoner, the aristocratic Nicolas Fouquet, the fallen superintendent of finance, was given new suits each season. While Eustache had no one to take care of him or keep him company, Fouquet enjoyed the services of valets. Eustache's food was barely sufficient to keep him alive, yet Fouquet ate the finest meals such as would have been available to him had he been free. Yet there was one respect in which the two men were the same: Fouquet was also guarded securely and was forbidden from communicating with the outside world, at least for the first few years of his imprisonment.

The two men were thrown together while in prison, with Eustache being forced to serve as the disgraced superintendent's valet. Being a prisoner's valet was a decidedly undesirable job. Valets were required to lodge with their masters, remaining in prison and forbidden even to visit their families for as long as they were in service.

Fouquet was meant to have two valets while in prison. However one had died, so only one valet, named La Rivière, was at his master's service. After failing to find a replacement, Saint-Mars remembered that Eustache had been described to him as a valet, and – with Louis XIV and Louvois' permission – successfully placed him as Fouquet's second valet. He was initially expected to work for him only when La

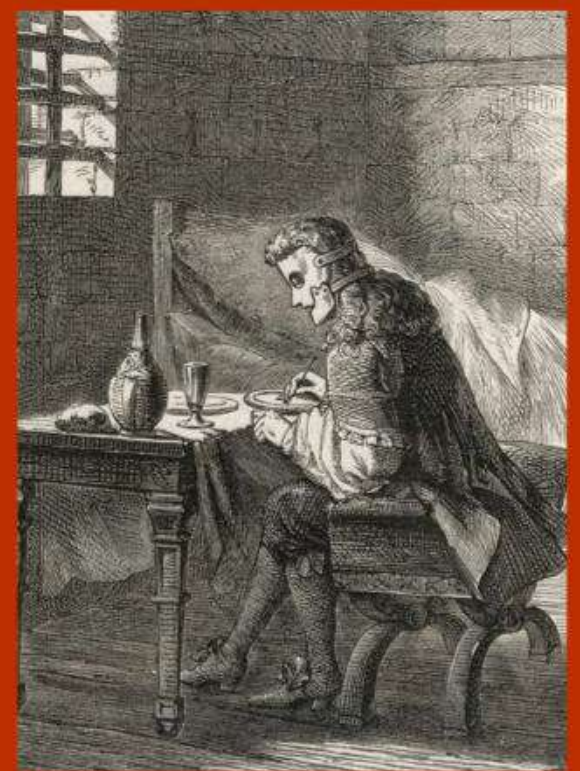
MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Josephine Wilkinson explains why three other candidates who were put forward couldn't have been the man in the iron mask

For many years, some scholars thought the man in the iron mask was an Italian diplomat named **Matthioli**. He negotiated the acquisition of the citadel of Casale for Louis XIV but was taken captive after he betrayed Louis. His candidacy was credible until it was discovered that he remained at Pignerol when Saint-Mars moved to Exilles.

A second candidate was a valet known as **Martin**, the servant of a man named Roux de Marsilly, who was allegedly involved in a Protestant plot to assassinate Louis XIV. Martin resigned from his post and settled in England. Lured back to France to act as a witness against his former master, he was apparently captured and spent the rest of his life in prison. However, this is not borne out in the historical record.

Eustache Dauger de Cavoye (a man with a remarkably similar name to my candidate, who lived at about the same time) proved to be a plausible contender: the name matches, and his crime-ridden life offers sufficient reason for why he might have been arrested. But Cavoye had been held in the asylum of Saint-Lazare while Eustache was at Pignerol, and it was there that he died in the 1680s.



A late 17th-century illustration of the man in the iron mask at his desk. The mysterious prisoner's identity has been contested for centuries

The man in the iron mask

Rivière was unable to carry out his duties. Eventually, however, he became a permanent fixture, even being allowed to accompany Fouquet when the latter received permission to walk on the walls of the citadel. In time, Fouquet was permitted to entertain visitors in prison, and Eustache looked after their needs as he did his master's.

With so many people coming and going, security became a concern, but Louis XIV and Louvois were not unduly worried. Saint-Mars was simply ordered to arrange with Fouquet “as you judge appropriate, regarding the security of the person named Eustache... recommending you above all, to see to it that he speaks to no one in private”. Fouquet, himself a state prisoner, now had the responsibility of guarding Eustache – and making sure that the reason for his imprisonment remained unknown.

What, then, was Eustache's secret? Clearly, it had to do with his activities prior to his arrest. Evidence for this is found in a letter written by Louvois to Fouquet on the king's orders. Louvois asked the former superintendent if Eustache had spoken in front of his other valet about what he had *seen* prior to his arrest. He then crossed out this line and replaced it with one which spoke about how Eustache *had been employed* before his arrest.

In the original *lettre de cachet*, Louis had merely stated that he was “dissatisfied” with this man's behaviour. He made no further elaboration. Louis, therefore, offers no hint of why Eustache had so displeased him. However, the context in which Eustache was arrested could provide the answer.

Servants and spies

In the summer of 1669, very important and secret negotiations were going on between King Charles II of England and Louis XIV. These were being conducted through Charles' sister Henrietta, duchesse d'Orléans, who was married to Louis' brother, Philippe. Charles and Henrietta used valets to carry messages back and forth across the English Channel, but these valets frequently engaged other servants to carry messages on their behalf. Often, Charles and Henrietta did not know who these people were. Indeed, in a letter to his sister, Charles noted that he had received a letter from her through “the Italian whose name and capacity you do not know, and he delivered your letter to me in a passage where it was so darke as I do not know his face againe if I see him”. Eustache, of course, was not this man, since he was not Italian, but French; however, this comment illustrates the atmosphere of secrecy that surrounded communication during this sensitive period.

Shortly before Eustache's arrest, Louvois



Henrietta, the sister of Charles II, holds a portrait of her husband, Philippe, who was Louis XIV's brother. The pair were conducting secret negotiations between the two monarchs, which Eustache could have been involved in

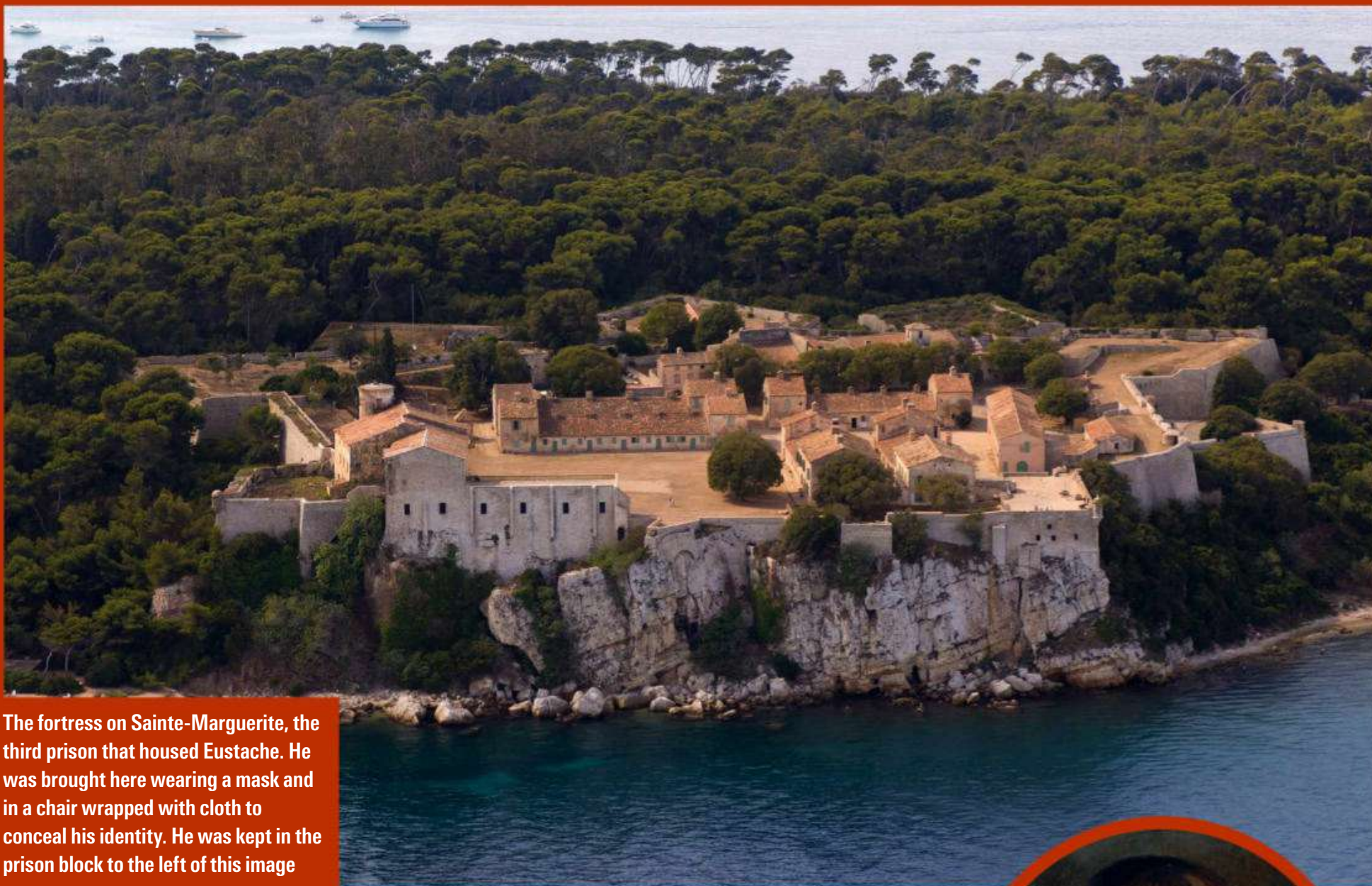
The secret that Eustache learned was serious enough to warrant a lifetime in prison

and Le Tellier, his father and predecessor at the ministry for war, were included in these negotiations. It is possible that Eustache had been employed by one or both of these men, or perhaps even by Henrietta herself, and that he had become privy to secret and sensitive information. This would account for Louvois' anger towards Eustache, with the minister referring to him as a “wretch”. And the fact

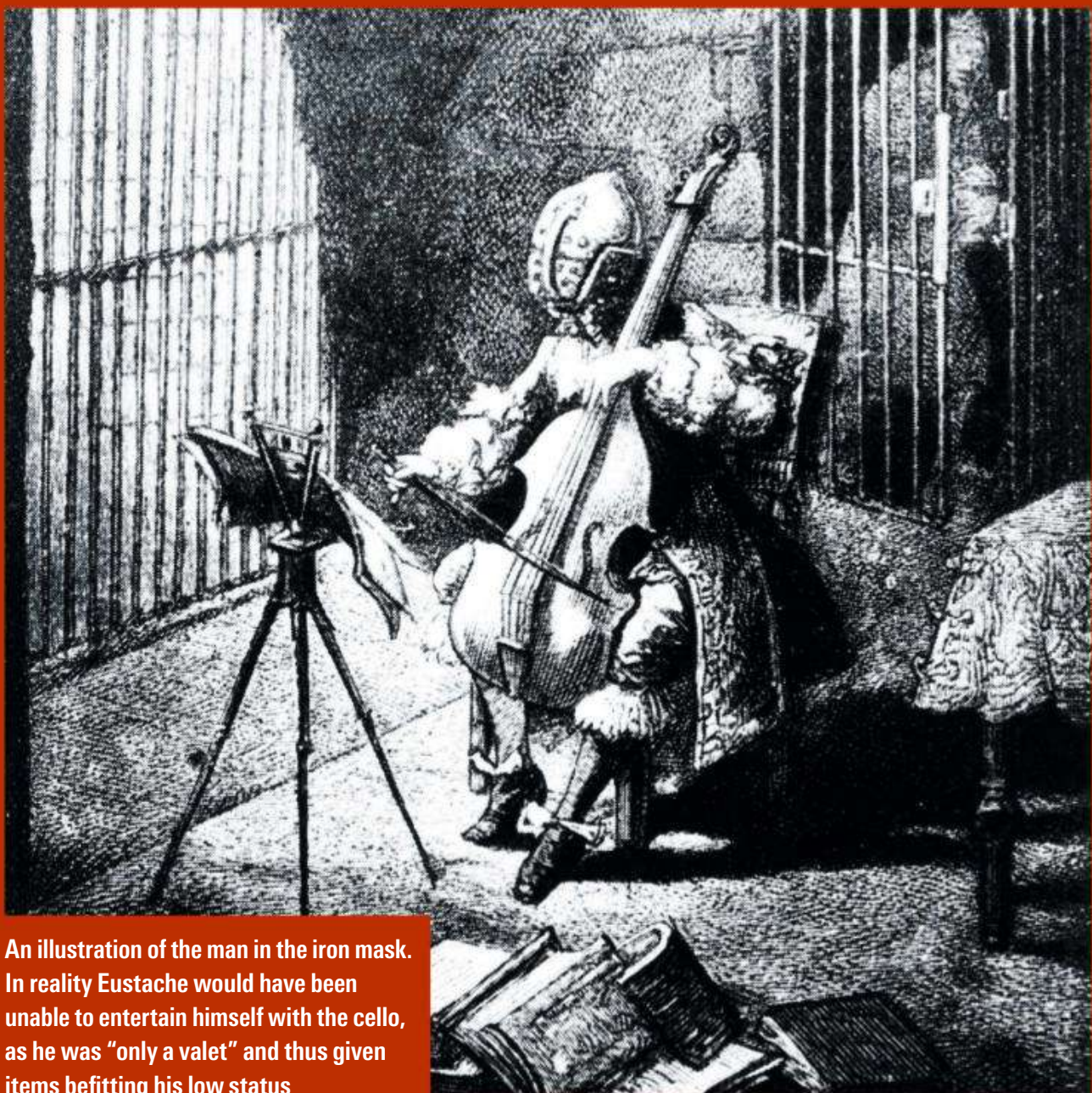
that Eustache was arrested near Dunkirk, one of the principal ports to England, adds more weight to this theory.

Whatever Eustache had heard, it was certainly deemed serious enough at the time to warrant a lifetime in prison. Upon the death of his fellow prisoner Fouquet, he was returned to his former cell. Because it was believed that La Rivière had learned Eustache's secret, and because he had failed to report a security breach that had been discovered shortly before Fouquet died, he was not dismissed from his post and sent away as he should have been but was instead imprisoned with Eustache. They were held together in Eustache's old cell until they could be transferred to another fortress, Exilles. La Rivière died there seven years later, leaving Eustache alone.

When they were imprisoned together, Eustache and La Rivière lost their names and their identities. Saint-Mars called them “the



The fortress on Sainte-Marguerite, the third prison that housed Eustache. He was brought here wearing a mask and in a chair wrapped with cloth to conceal his identity. He was kept in the prison block to the left of this image



An illustration of the man in the iron mask. In reality Eustache would have been unable to entertain himself with the cello, as he was "only a valet" and thus given items befitting his low status



A portrait of Nicholas Fouquet. He had been tasked with guarding Eustache (who served as his valet) and making sure he told no one his secret



The gaoler Saint-Mars (above) inflated Eustache's importance as a prisoner to try to hold on to his own high status, Josephine Wilkinson claims

The man in the iron mask

gentlemen of the Lower Tower”, or his two *merles*, or blackbirds. Later, Eustache would be referred to in official correspondence simply as Saint-Mars’ “old prisoner” or, as Saint-Mars himself liked to call him, “my prisoner”. When Louvois died in 1691 and was replaced in the war ministry by his son, Barbezieux, the new secretary did not know who Eustache was or why he had been imprisoned. Eustache had been forgotten, and his secret had lost its importance.

The man in the velvet mask

Nevertheless, he still had his uses. Saint-Mars, who had enjoyed the prestige of being the keeper of illustrious prisoners such as Fouquet, now had no one in his care except Eustache, a man of low social status. In an attempt to preserve his own status as a gaoler, Saint-Mars exaggerated Eustache’s importance by letting people believe that he was guarding a secret prisoner. Whispers abounded that he might have been Henry Cromwell, the son of Oliver Cromwell, or else the popular duc de Beaufort, who had disappeared at the siege of Candia.

Upon his transfer to the island of Sainte-Marguerite near Cannes, Saint-Mars took Eustache with him, providing him with an elaborate mode of transport: a chair tightly wrapped round with cloth. This was

Saint-Mars covered his prisoner’s face not to hide who he was, but to hide who he was not

supposed to hide Eustache from onlookers, but instead merely attracted the attention of the curious. According to one source, Saint-Mars also made Eustache wear a mask for the journey. However, he had not been made to hide his face when he travelled to Pignerol, nor when he was in his cell or serving Fouquet. Saint-Mars had not received any orders to hide Eustache’s face; it was merely another means for the gaoler to fuel the mystery surrounding Eustache, and thereby enhance his own prestige.

Finally, Saint-Mars became governor of the Bastille. While Eustache was initially to be left behind on the island, Saint-Mars insisted on bringing him to Paris. At this point, official communication about Eustache

ends, although he is mentioned in the registers of a Bastille administrator, who noted that the prisoner arrived masked. At the prison, he wore a black velvet mask which covered the upper portion of his face whenever he might expect to be seen, such as when he went to mass. Five years after arriving at the Bastille, in 1703, Eustache died while still a prisoner there and was buried in the prison’s parish churchyard of Saint-Paul’s.

In many ways, the man in the iron mask was the invention of Saint-Mars, an ambitious gaoler unable to let go of the celebrity status that guarding illustrious prisoners had bestowed upon him. But in reality, Eustache was not the royal prisoner of legend – Saint-Mars had needed to cover his prisoner’s face not to hide who he was, but to hide who he was not. Voltaire was more right than he realised when, referring to Eustache’s imprisonment, he said “no man of any consequence in Europe disappeared”. **H**

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Josephine Wilkinson’s new book, *The Man in the Iron Mask: The Truth About Europe’s Most Famous Prisoner*, is out from Amberley Publishing on 15 August

LISTEN

Tune in to a Great Lives episode on **The Man in the Iron Mask**: bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0076f5w

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A c1890 lithograph of the man in the iron mask in his cell. Rather than being the royal prisoner of legend, he may have been a commoner

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Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

Who was the Greenbrier Ghost?

►►► She was (Elva) Zona Heaster Shue, whose body was found at her home in Greenbrier County, West Virginia, on 23 January 1897.

By the time doctor George Knapp arrived, Zona's husband, Edward Shue, had returned home and laid out her body in a high-neck dress. His apparent grief made examination difficult and Knapp wrote "childbirth" as the cause of death, saying he'd recently treated her for an unspecified "feminine" problem.

After the funeral, Zona's mother, Mary Jane Heaster, claimed a bedsheet taken from the coffin turned red when she tried to wash it. Weeks later, Zona apparently appeared to her in four dreams, saying Edward had broken her neck; she turned her head to face backwards to prove it.

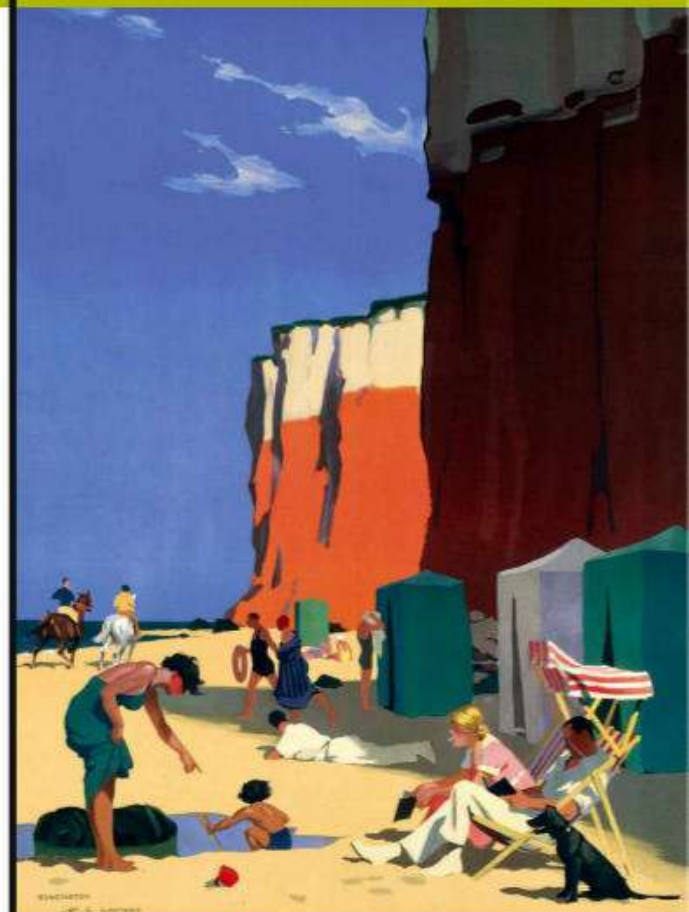
The local prosecuting attorney didn't buy Mary Jane's tale, but the death was suspicious enough for him to order the

corpse exhumed. The autopsy revealed that Zona had indeed been strangled. It was found that Edward's first marriage ended because of his violent rages, while his second wife had died from a blow to the head, culprit unknown.

At the trial, Edward's defence attorney tried to ridicule Mary Jane's ghost story, but badgering a bereaved mother was poor courtroom tactics. Her tale held the jury enthralled, and they convicted Edward.

Was Mary Jane's spectral tale merely a ruse to get the authorities to act on well-founded suspicions? Whatever her motivations, the case of a ghost helping secure a murder conviction is unusual. (However, it is not unique. Look up the conviction of the killer of Lisa Posluns in Canada in 2006.)

.....
Eugene Byrne, author and journalist specialising in history



A 20th-century poster advertising rail services to Hunstanton, Norfolk. Cheap tickets made summer holidays accessible to the masses

When did Britons start going on summer holidays?

►►► Inevitably the answer depends on social class. In the mid-18th century, aristocratic health tourists were sent to the seaside for a winter cure. By the time George III gave his all-important patronage to sea bathing, on holiday at Weymouth in July and August 1789, the fashion had moved to the warmer months.

We know middle-class families were joining in by the start of Queen Victoria's reign, because she quit Brighton after finding the beach in summer a noisy spot, packed with tradespeople. Cheap railway excursions soon allowed working people a day out, but the urban masses – who were probably most in need of an annual stay-away break – were the last to receive it.

The 1938 Holidays with Pay Act finally made holidays a universal right. Despite several attempts to spread demand by changing school term dates in the UK, we still overwhelmingly take our main holidays in the summer.

.....
Kathryn Ferry, author of *Seaside 100* (Unicorn Publishing Group, 2020)



ILLUSTRATION BY **GLEN MCBETH**



Culloden (shown in a contemporary painting) was the last military engagement in Britain between two armies, but was it the last battle?

What was the last battle fought on British soil?

Craig Crosthwaite, Ayrshire

»»» Much depends on how we define a battle. If we mean an engagement between two armies, then the last battle on British soil was fought on 16 April 1746 at Culloden near Inverness in Scotland. That day a government army under the Duke of Cumberland defeated a Jacobite force led by Charles Edward Stuart, better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. More than 2,000 men, most of them Jacobites, were killed and wounded in the fighting, which effectively ended their plans to re-establish the Stuart dynasty in Britain.

Just over 50 years later, in February 1797, a French force landed at Fishguard in Pembrokeshire in what has been described as the last foreign invasion of mainland Britain. The Pembroke Yeomanry were awarded a battle honour for their part in defeating the landing but there was no battle to speak of. The “invaders”, little more than a drunken rabble, surrendered without a fight.

Although it might be argued that it was too small to qualify as a battle, the last military engagement on British soil against members of a foreign armed force took place during the Second World War. On 27 September 1940,

a German Ju88 bomber crash-landed on Graveney Marsh in Kent. When some British troops who were billeted in a nearby pub turned up to investigate, they came under machine-gun fire from the crew. The British returned fire, and – after one German airman was shot in the foot – the crew surrendered.

.....
Julian Humphrys, historian and trustee of the Battlefields Trust

»» For more on the battle of Culloden, turn to our feature on Walter Scott on page 66



DID YOU KNOW...?

Deadly dash

In 1807, a shout of “Fight! Fight!” in the audience at Sadler’s Wells Theatre, London (pictured) was mistaken for a warning cry of “Fire! Fire!” In the ensuing panic, 18 people were trampled to death. Two men and a woman were later charged with causing the disturbance that had initiated the mad scramble to get out. The judge, deploring “the fatal effects” that had resulted from their failure to observe “the principles of decorum”, sentenced them all to periods of imprisonment.



Saucy Chaucer

The poet Geoffrey Chaucer made his first appearance in history as a teenage dandy, modelling a skimpy outfit for men. In 1357, his patron, the noblewoman Elizabeth de Burgh, is recorded as having bought him a “paltok” for four shillings. Paltoks, according to a contemporary chronicler, were “extremely short garments... which failed to conceal the arses or the private parts”. A theologian at the time was convinced that wearing such clothes caused the plague and risked the wrath of God.

Fashion victims

In September 1922, there was violence in New York when gangs roamed the streets, plucking off men’s hats and stomping on them. The so-called “Straw Hat Riots” began because there was an unwritten rule that nobody was supposed to wear a straw hat after

a certain date. Hooligans decided to enforce the rule by snatching the hats from dockworkers. They were met with resistance and a mass brawl ensued, bringing traffic to a halt in Manhattan. Rioting lasted for several days. **H**

.....
Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history

A pile of discarded straw hats, c1935. This accessory caused a mass brawl in New York in the early 1920s

Super-sized

From cutting caricatures of high-profile women to affectionate depictions of Britain's "heaviest man",

In 1773, John Raphael Smith produced a work of art called [*Miss Macaroni and Her Gallant at a Print-Shop*](#)¹. This scene (shown right) depicts a scenario ever more common on the Georgian high street: passers-by congregating around a shop front to gawp at portraits of fellow citizens depicted on a series of prints.

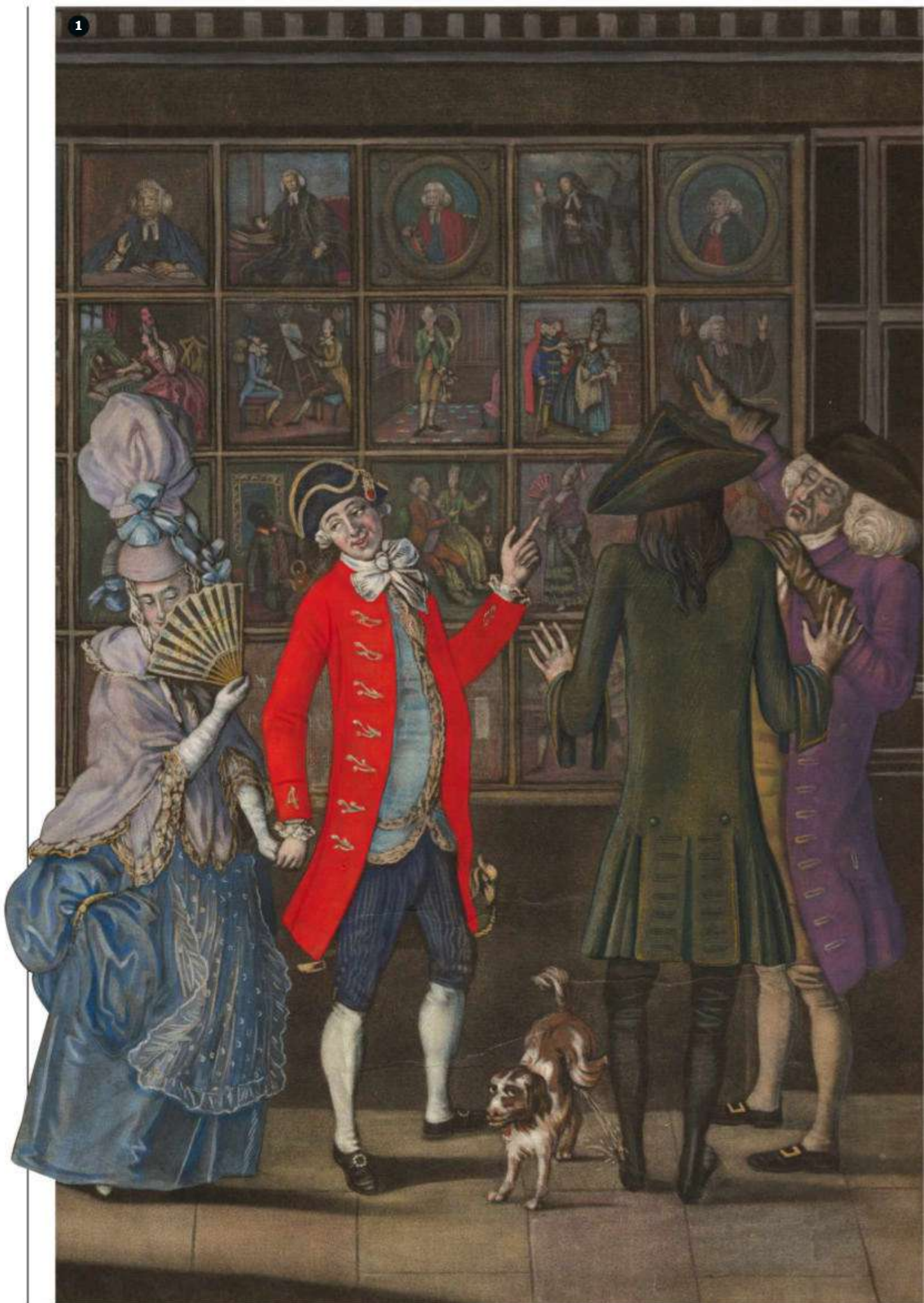
Georgian Britain was awash with printed images. Prints populated coffee houses, people's homes and, as we can see in Raphael Smith's work, even hung from dedicated shop windows. This was an age characterised by a "print revolution", a technological and cultural transformation that saw more imagery available to view and to purchase than ever before.

This artistic revolution coincided with another transformation in 18th-century Britain: a sea change in the way that people depicted themselves. Gone was the era of deferential, idealised portraits of society's leading lights, to be replaced by bawdy, colourful – and often deeply unflattering – works of satire. Georgian prints invariably poked fun at their subjects – and it's for that very reason that the public loved them.

Although often amusing to our eyes today, the Georgian satire revolution tells us more than simply what made people laugh. It also reveals some of the biggest anxieties of the period – and one of those anxieties centred around the issue of fatness.

The language of graphic satire in Georgian Britain was one of exaggeration, which meant that the body parts of the individuals portrayed were routinely overemphasised. In these works, artists eagerly enlarged noses, lengthened chins and inflated stomachs, breasts and buttocks, sometimes to extreme ends.

But the preponderance of corpulent bodies in Georgian art was more than a mere satirical device: fatness was an issue that intersected with many of the age's social mores. In fact, the 18th century was a time in which corpulence took on an unprecedented cultural currency, one in which artists lampooned the nobility in satirical prints, and famously large people were commodified



Georgians

Freya Gowrley considers why 18th-century satirists were so fixated with fatness



Left: People congregate around a series of portraits in *Miss Macaroni and Her Gallant at a Print-Shop* (1773). The 18th century was a heyday of bawdy satirical prints that cast a harsh light on their subjects' perceived defects

Right: The language of graphic satire in Georgian Britain was one of exaggeration, and high-profile women often found themselves in the firing line. This print from 1795 lampoons the weight of political hostess Albinia Hobart, Countess of Buckinghamshire



in portraits, prints and decorative consumable goods. At the same time, corpulent bodies were put on public display as spectacular objects, while the clothing that evidenced their former owners' size (not to mention the furniture that had been made or altered to accommodate fat bodies) became desirable items and objects of renown.

All this happened due to the convergence of a number of social, intellectual, economic and cultural phenomena. Alongside the rise of print culture, the 18th century witnessed an increased availability of food, and the so-called "consumer revolution" where those on the higher rungs of the social ladder had unprecedented access to luxury consumables.

This was also the period in which the "modern self" can be said to have emerged, a time that saw active attempts to outline – and define ideal forms of – categories of identity such as race, class and gender. Accompanying these developments were changes in beauty standards and attitudes towards the body, which shifted decisively in the second half of the century to establish thinness as the preferred body type for women. When artists and commentators attempted to portray or debate femininity or race – even what it meant to be human – the issue of corpulence was never far away.

Nor was the issue of gender. The 18th century has often been understood as an age that challenges the simplistic model of gendered "separate spheres", in which men occupied the worlds of politics, work and other forms of public culture, while women were relegated to the home. We only have to think about women like the political activist, socialite and style icon Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire to show that some Georgian women led vibrant public lives.

However, this relative freedom did not come without critique. Concerns around women's transgressions beyond the bounds of acceptable feminine behaviour abounded, particularly in the satirical image. Here fatness emerged as a consistent visual language, with famously public-facing women such as the actress Sarah Siddons and the political hostess [*Albinia Hobart, Countess of Buckinghamshire*](#) (see print 2) routinely

Attitudes shifted decisively to establish thinness as the preferred body type for women

Georgian fatness

satirised through the exaggerated portrayal of their forms. Albinia's "crimes" included lasciviousness, overindulgence and a presence in the worlds of gambling and the theatre – and for that, the satirists savaged her.

James Gillray's print *Dido in Despair!* ³ typifies this trend. Published in 1801, it shows a rotund Emma Hamilton, arms and leg raised in a desperate gesture of anguish caused by the departure of her lover, Lord Nelson. Emma, who rose through the ranks of 18th-century society to become the wife of Sir William Hamilton, first won fame for her performances portraying well-known sculptures and works of art, known as "attitudes", enacted at her husband's home in Naples. Rendering her body the object of public display, these *tableaux vivants* made Emma the subject of vicious critique, which presented the "attitudes" as overtly sexual in nature.

Traces of the erotic potential of Hamilton's performances can be seen throughout *Dido in Despair!* Alluding to Sir William Hamilton's famous collection of classical antiquities, the meaning of a cluster of objects at Emma's feet is made clear by the grouping of statuettes in which a satyr gazes lustily at an armless Venus. At the same time, an open book on the window seat depicts Emma reclining nude. Its title, *Studies of Academic Attitudes Taken from the Life*, makes its frame of reference obvious through direct reference to Emma's performances. Read against the fulsome fleshiness of her body, these classical allusions encourage the viewer to read the print as a critique of Emma's extra-marital trysts, as alluded to by the presence of her slumbering, blissfully unaware husband in the background of the print.

Hamilton's apparent lack of morals are also indicated by the trinkets that sit atop her dressing table. Including rouge, hairpins and a beaded necklace, these consumable goods point to another of the reasons that fatness became so culturally prevalent in the 18th century, the "luxury debates". A shifting economic climate that resulted in an unprecedented availability of luxury goods sparked intense discussion over the nature of needs versus desires, one that was central to the moralising approaches to fatness that surfaced at this time.

Another print by Gillray, this one from 1799, reinforces the close connection between corpulent bodies and the potentially dangerous indulgences of luxury. Titled *Punch Cures the Gout, -the Colic, -and the 'Tisick* ⁴, it shows the sufferers of these illnesses seated around a punchbowl. All nevertheless enjoy the refined luxuries of the Georgian era, from fine furnishings to sumptuous



Above: James Gillray's *Dido in Despair!* (1801) mockingly accuses a rotund Emma Hamilton of lasciviousness and greed

Below: Gillray's *Punch Cures the Gout, -the Colic, -and the 'Tisick* (1799) riffs on popular concerns over the dangers of over-indulgence





Fatness was employed as a metaphor for the corrupting power of foreign lands on colonists

Below: In Gillray's *A Sale of English-beauties, in the East-Indies* (1786) both Kolkatan men and British colonists are depicted as corpulent

dressing gowns, which contrast powerfully with their unhappy physical states.

Of particular interest here is the porcelain punch bowl, whose design suggests it is of Chinese origin. Its presence within the print functions as a reference to the great swathes of porcelain goods that had arrived in the country since the late 17th century, after which point a veritable “mania” for such import wares emerged. As such, the bowl recalls some of the broader, indeed global, issues at stake in the consumption of luxury objects – namely, the idea that British-made wares and manufacturing might be supplanted thanks to the vogue for foreign goods. The influx of these material objects – which were often perceived as having a negative effect on those who owned them – only increased thanks to the lucrative new trade established by the nascent British empire.

Fatness figures heavily in images of imperial encounter. Visual images and printed texts used corpulence to reinforce the idea of otherness and of dislocation from “home”. Fatness was deployed as a metaphor for the changes enacted by the imperial landscape on colonial bodies, transforming enterprising businessmen into the lazy, corpulent figures who populated parts of modern-day India and the Caribbean.

Combining interrelated fears around foreignness and sexual immorality, Gillray's *A Sale of English-beauties, in the East-Indies* 5 of 1786 is typical of this genre. It features a





ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

racially diverse cast of characters, depicting a shipload of sex workers arriving fresh off the boat in Kolkata, whose plump bodies mingle with the corpulent figures of Kolkatan men and British colonists alike.

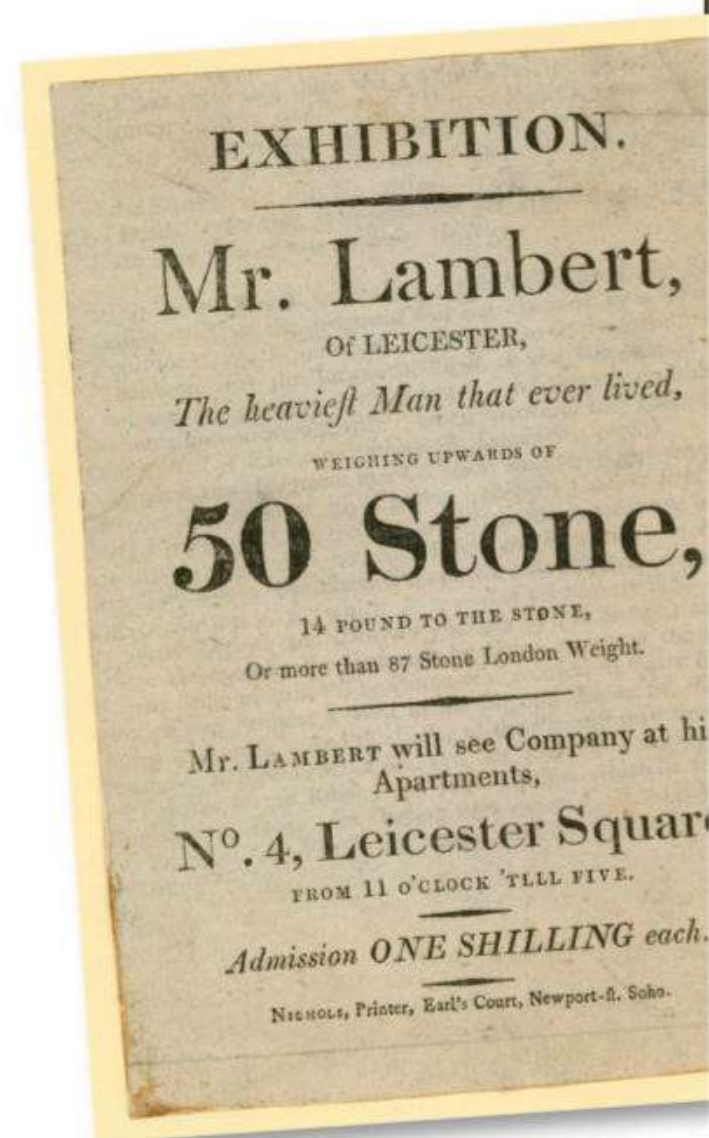
As in the later image of Emma Hamilton, here fatness signals the implied indulgence of sexual depravity and an overall lack of morals. Within such images, corpulence became a powerful metaphor for the vexed contact zones of the British empire, where once strictly delineated fault lines between identities and cultures were blurred.

Yet fatness could have more positive connotations. Images of the robust bodies of the British labouring classes, for example, highlight how their healthy plumpness was a signifier of strong constitutions – and, by extension, a healthy national character. Satirists consistently portrayed “John Bull”, the very embodiment of Britishness in the 18th century, as fat, sturdy and ruddy-cheeked. As such, he stood in direct opposition to symbolic representations of France as dangerously malnourished, surviving on a diet of thin gruel.

Gillray’s *French Liberty, British Slavery* 6 from 1792 exemplifies this trend. It shows a skinny Frenchman, wearing tattered clothing and eating a meagre dinner of spring

Above: Gillray’s *French Liberty, British Slavery* (1792) echoed the belief among many Britons that the French Revolution had delivered anything *but* freedom

In Britain
plumpness was
used as a signifier
of a strong
constitution and
a healthy national
character





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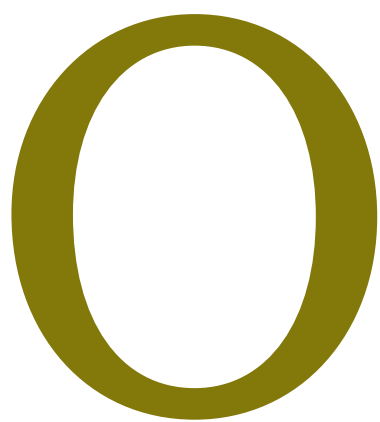


By 1942, the tentacles of **the Holocaust** had spread from Europe across north Africa **into the Middle East. Gershom Gorenberg** explores the largely forgotten brutalisation of Jewish populations from Morocco to Iraq in the Second World War



Hitting rock bottom

Tunisian Jews are rounded up and marched through the streets of Tunis carrying shovels in December 1942. Forced labour was just one way in which Germany, Italy and Vichy France persecuted Jewish people outside Europe



On 20 July 1942, a German warplane touched down in the Egyptian desert near El Alamein, where German and Italian forces were battling Britain's Eighth Army. From the plane stepped Walther Rauff, a blond, blue-eyed *Obersturmbannführer* – a lieutenant colonel in the SS, the brutal, elite corps of the Nazi Party.

At 36, Rauff was already an engineer of death. His previous assignments included the mass production of mobile gas chambers used by the SS to murder as many as half a million people in eastern Europe as part of the Final Solution, the Nazi genocide of Jews.

From the plane, Rauff went to Erwin Rommel's battle headquarters, where he presented his orders to the field marshal's chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Siegfried Westphal. As commander of a new mobile killing unit, an *Einsatzkommando*, Rauff was assigned to carry out "executive measures", meaning mass murder of Jews, as soon as Rommel completed his expected conquest of Egypt. Rauff had come from Berlin, where the Nazi leadership was awash with optimism about Rommel "pressing forward through Egypt into the Near East", as German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop had just told the Japanese ambassador.

After Egypt, Rauff's next target would be the 500,000 or more Jews of Palestine. And if, as Adolf Hitler expected, Rommel's tanks drove forward to the oil fields of Iraq, the Jews of that country and of Syria and Lebanon would face mortal danger.

But Rommel's chief of staff explained to Rauff that logistical problems, especially lack of fuel, were delaying the Axis forces' advance, so the two agreed that Rauff and his team would move from Germany to Athens, Greece. From there, they could deploy to Egypt once Rommel swept forward into Alexandria – a mere 60 miles east of El Alamein – and Cairo.

It never happened. The desert battlefield would be the site of Rommel's most famous defeat, and one of the great turning points of the Second World War.

Yet Rauff's mission to Egypt is fraught with significance. Contrary to popular memory, the Holocaust was not only a European event. Across north Africa and the Middle East, from Morocco to Iraq, the Germans and the regimes collaborating with them systematically persecuted Jews. Hitler had declared his intent to eradicate the Jews of the Middle East, and the SS actively prepared to do so. Allied



SS officer Walther Rauff, photographed in 1945. After his mission of mass extermination was halted at El Alamein, Rauff was posted to Tunisia

victories – heroic, and at times close to miraculous – prevented the Nazis from carrying out the worst of their plans, but any full account of the Holocaust requires a map that extends well beyond Europe.

The early months of the Second World War were disturbing but distant thunder for Jews in the Arab world. Three events in June 1940 changed that. First, the Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini announced to an obediently cheering crowd of thousands in Rome that Italy was joining Germany and going to war against "the plutocratic and reactionary democracies of the west": Britain and France. His immediate goal was seizing a scrap of France as it collapsed before the German onslaught. The larger implication was that war was inevitable in north Africa, since Mussolini dreamed of creating a "new Roman empire", using the Italian colony of Libya as a base for expansion.

A week later, First World War hero Philippe Pétain formed a new government in France and sought peace with Germany. The armistice left Pétain's government, based in Vichy, in control only of south-eastern France, but it ruled most of France's overseas empire, including the north African colonies of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

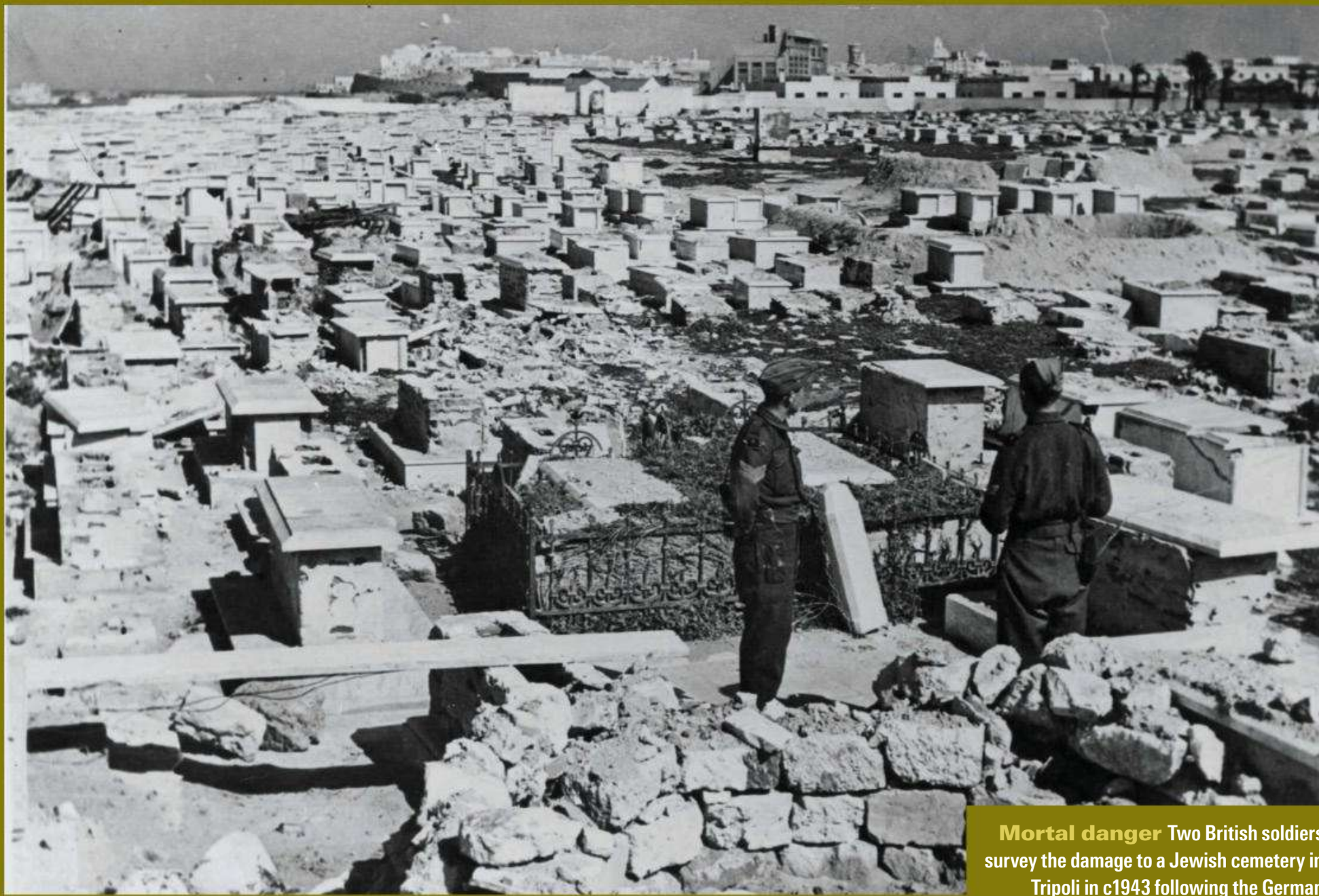
The third incident came at the end of June. An Italian anti-aircraft unit at Tobruk in eastern Libya shot down an Italian plane, mistaking it for a British aircraft. On board was Italo Balbo, the governor-general of Libya.

Balbo's death made life go from bad to worse for Libya's 30,000 Jews. Though a prominent Fascist, Balbo had opposed the Nazi-style anti-Semitism that Mussolini had adopted. The Italian campaign against the Jews had begun in 1938 with the Manifesto of Race that defined Italians as Aryans, and Jews as biologically inferior. A series of race laws barred Jews from government jobs, from teaching or studying in Italian schools, from practising professions including medicine and law, and more.

Balbo avoided enforcing the laws strictly in Libya, especially those that locked Jews out of the colony's economy. "The Jews are already a dead people; there is no need to oppress them cruelly," Balbo explained to Mussolini in a letter. Il Duce answered: "Though the Jews may seem to be dead, they never really are," echoing the Nazi view of Jews as a powerful, clandestine threat. Once Balbo was dead, the official persecution of the Jews in Libya could be escalated.

The Vichy regime in France, meanwhile, showed how fully it had become a German satellite by enacting its own Jewish Statute in October 1940. The move was driven in part by the home-grown anti-Semitism of the French right, but, as Vichy foreign minister Paul Baudouin would write, German pressure played a major role. Modelled on Nazi laws, the French statute defined Jewishness in racial terms, with a Jew being anyone with three Jewish grandparents or with two and a Jewish spouse. Among

Adolf Hitler had declared his intent to eradicate the Jews of the Middle East, and the SS actively prepared to do so



Mortal danger Two British soldiers survey the damage to a Jewish cemetery in Tripoli in c1943 following the German retreat from Libya. Jewish populations had faced terrible persecution as the Germans advanced across North Africa



Fascist fatality

Italian Fascist and governor-general of Libya, Italo Balbo, rejected the anti-Semitic laws passed by Mussolini but was killed by friendly fire in the skies over Tobruk. Following his death, persecution of Libya's 30,000 Jews intensified and many were sent to a desert concentration camp



Axis shift Benito Mussolini (centre of photo, in darker uniform) and senior officers inspect a bomber formation in Cyrenaica, Libya, in July 1942, as Axis forces fight for control of north Africa. An ultimate Allied victory at El Alamein saved countless Jewish lives

FORGOTTEN VICTIMS: THE GRIM FATE OF JEWS IN NORTH AFRICA AND



Morocco

As a French protectorate, Morocco was subject to Vichy control after the fall of France. While Jews were not sent to death camps in Europe, Sultan Mohammed V issued a decree enacting Vichy's Jewish Statute. Under wartime rationing, Jews received less to eat than Europeans or Muslims, and a 1941 edict gave Jews living in European neighbourhoods one month to move back into the *mellahs*, or Jewish quarters, where overcrowding accelerated the spread of disease.



Jewish boys living under Vichy rule in Fes, Morocco, wear the Star of David, 1941

Tunisia

Subject to Vichy rule from 1940, Tunisia was then occupied by Germany in November 1942. The SS sent in the *Einsatzkommando* under the command of Walther Rauff, who had been originally assigned to the mass murder of Egypt and Palestine's Jews. Rauff took Jewish leaders hostage in order to round up 5,000 Jews for forced labour, and imposed fines on the pretext that "international Jewry" was responsible for Allied bombings. As many as 400 Jews died due to the German occupation, but the Allied liberation of Tunisia in May 1943 thwarted Nazi plans to ship Tunisia's 66,000 Jews to death camps in Europe.

A Tunisian Jew is questioned by a German soldier. Occupation brought harsh anti-Semitic laws



Libya

Italian dictator Benito Mussolini enacted anti-Jewish laws that were enforced with increasing strictness in the Italian colony of Libya. In 1942, on Mussolini's orders, 2,600 Jews from eastern Libya were trucked to a desert concentration camp, where more than 500 died of disease and starvation. The British conquest of Libya after El Alamein prevented the imprisonment of the remainder of Libya's estimated 30,000 Jews and resulted in the liberation of the concentration camp at Giado (pictured below).



Palestine and Egypt

The SS created a mobile killing unit to carry out genocide in Egypt and Palestine as the Axis army, under the command of General Erwin Rommel, reached El Alamein in July 1942. Britain's Special Operations Executive trained Palestinian Jews for guerrilla warfare after the expected Nazi conquest. But the dogged British defence at El Alamein stopped Rommel and prevented the murder of an estimated 75,000 Jews in Egypt and half a million or more in Palestine.



Syria and Lebanon

French mandatory officials declared fealty to Vichy and enacted anti-Jewish statutes. Jews were dismissed from government posts, the press and the railways, but enforcement was otherwise sporadic against the 30,000 or more Jews across the two countries. An Anglo-Free French invasion in June 1941 ended Vichy rule, and Free French general Charles de Gaulle abrogated the anti-Jewish laws.

Iraq

Four colonels, known as the Golden Square, carried out a pro-Axis coup in April 1941, threatening some 110,000 Jews in the country. Government radio broadcast a stream of Nazi propaganda. In Baghdad, pro-Nazi paramilitary group Youth Phalanxes arrested or sometimes murdered Jews on the streets. The regime's collapse in the face of a British invasion ignited a pogrom in which soldiers and Youth Phalanxes murdered 180 or more Jews. The events shattered Jewish confidence in life in Iraq, setting the stage for a later exodus.



The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini (seen before the war), was a supporter of the 1941 revolt against British rule in Iraq

the measures, Jews were banned from all teaching, judicial and police positions, and most of the civil service. Only 2 per cent of lawyers, doctors and midwives could be Jewish – all professions in which Jews were prominent.

The provisions echoed those adopted in other Nazi satellites in Europe, including Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. In the French case, though, their reach extended to Africa. The Vichy statute was applied directly in French Algeria, while the sultan of Morocco and bey of Tunisia, nominal rulers of French protectorates, issued decrees bringing in similar rules.

After enacting the Jewish Statute, Pétain abrogated the 1870 decree that granted French citizenship to Algerian Jews. Vichy authorities gave Jews a month to sell their businesses. The sultan of Morocco decreed that Jews living in European areas of cities had one month to move back to the old, crowded Jewish quarters. There, with more people packed in, disease spread quickly. Step by step, the Jews of French north Africa saw their lives and livelihoods constricted, in a process parallel to what German Jews had endured early in Nazi rule.

Another country at the far end of the Arab world briefly tilted into the Axis orbit when, in April 1941, four Iraqi colonels overthrew the British-aligned government. The coup was planned in the Baghdad home of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and exiled leader of the Arab revolt in Palestine in the late 1930s. 'Abd al-Ilāh, the regent who ruled in place of Iraq's six-year-old king, Faisal II, fled to Transjordan, while the king was smuggled out of Baghdad by his mother.

Iraq's government radio station broadcast a stream of "inflammatory agitation against the Jews and powerful appeals to Nazism", according to a later commission of inquiry. Baghdad was then about one-sixth Jewish. On the streets, members of pro-Nazi paramilitary groups, such as the Youth Phalanxes, seized random Jews and dragged them to police stations, or occasionally murdered them. Meanwhile, Britain's codebreakers at Bletchley Park deciphered Axis messages that the German and Italian air forces were sending unmarked warplanes to aid the Iraqi junta and that ships arriving at Rhodes bore ammunition to be airlifted to Iraq.

The British quickly organised an invasion and the Iraqi army had crumbled by June. Husseini and the other plotters fled. When 'Abd al-Ilāh returned to Baghdad, British troops stayed outside the city in the hope that his return would not look like their doing. A crowd of Jews came to greet the regent, but as they returned home Iraqi soldiers attacked them, with teens from the Youth Phalanxes joining in. Only on the next day did the newly

The Jews of French north Africa saw their lives constricted, in a process parallel to that endured by German Jews early in Nazi rule

Desert fox

Commander of the Afrika Korps, Erwin Rommel (right), gives orders during the north African campaign. Often described as the "war without hate", the conflict actually witnessed numerous persecutions against Jewish populations



The route to El Alamein

Rommel and Marshal of Italy Ugo Cavallero (right) prepare to fly to El Alamein to inspect Axis positions in 1942



Operation Torch

Anti-aircraft fire during a raid on Algiers in November 1942, part of the Allied invasion of French Morocco and Algeria. The fight for Tunisia, where a "reign of terror" was being waged on Jews, would follow

returned regent finally order the police to disperse the mobs. “A large number of Jewish shops and homes were looted, and several hundred Jews were brutally murdered,” the British ambassador reported. The dead of the Baghdad pogrom, the Farhud, may be the least known and least acknowledged victims of Nazism.

Husseini eventually reached Berlin and, in November 1941, met with Hitler. He asked the führer to declare publicly his backing for “the independence and unity of Palestine, Syria and Iraq”. While Hitler avoided such a pledge, he promised that once German armies in the Soviet Union pushed south into the Middle East, “Germany’s objective would then be solely the destruction of the Jewish element” in the Arab world.

Axis armies would actually threaten the Middle East from a different direction. In September 1940, Italy launched an invasion of Egypt from Libya. By winter, the British under General Archibald Wavell counterattacked and pushed the Italians out of Cyrenaica, the eastern province of Libya. Afraid the Allies would keep going and threaten Europe from the south, Hitler sent an army to Libya under his favourite general, Rommel.

In the expanse of the desert, the fighting see-sawed wildly. Rommel reconquered most of Cyrenaica, then in late 1941 the British Eighth Army overran the province again, only to be pushed back once more. By early 1942, Benghazi, the largest town in Cyrenaica, had changed hands four times.

Mussolini found a scapegoat for Italian military failures: Libya’s Jews. On 7 February 1942, he issued a decree to expel them to a concentration camp in the desert. Colonial authorities started with the Jews of small towns in Cyrenaica, and lists of those to be expelled began appearing in synagogues each fortnight. Survivors would remember that 40 people were packed onto each open truck and that they travelled for five days in the sun to the camp at Giado, south-west of Tripoli. There, men were subjected to forced labour. Inmates received between 100 and 150 grams of bread a day, and when they complained about the lack of food, camp authorities told them: “The purpose of bringing you here is not to feed you, but to starve you to death.” Of the 2,600 Jews imprisoned at Giado, more than one in five died within a few months of hunger or typhus.

One factor slowed the *sfollamento*, the “clearing”, of Jews, according to the German consul in Tripoli: a shortage of trucks. They were needed to supply Rommel’s new offensive, which began in late May 1942. Thanks to his secret weapon, a superb intelligence source in Cairo, he had taken Tobruk in eastern Libya by 21 June. A message

from the Cairo source said that the Eighth Army was “decisively beaten” and “if Rommel intends to take the Nile Delta this is a suitable moment”.

Rommel plunged into Egypt. In Berlin and Rome, expectations soared and the SS sped up its preparations to send an *Einsatzkommando* to the Middle East. Yet during that crucial last week of June 1942, an intelligence breakthrough at Bletchley Park identified and silenced the Axis source.

The timing was providential. Rommel was caught by surprise when British commander General Claude Auchinleck made a last-minute decision to move his defensive line to El Alamein. Auchinleck’s change, the topography of the area and dogged fighting by British, Australian, New Zealand, Indian and South African troops stopped the Axis advance. Rommel – and Rauff – would never reach Cairo or Tel Aviv.

Following the battle of El Alamein, in November 1942, the Eighth Army, now commanded by General Bernard Montgomery, shattered Rommel’s army and forced it to retreat eastward. Days later, the Allies launched Operation Torch, the Anglo-American invasion of Morocco and Algeria. In response, German forces seized Tunisia as a last redoubt in Africa and the SS sent Rauff’s team.

As German historians Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers have detailed, Rauff carried out a “reign of terror” against Tunisian Jews that included conscripting 5,000 for forced labour. But with shipping to Europe under constant attack, Rauff could not carry out the larger SS plan to send Tunisia’s Jews to death camps in Europe.

The Nazis’ intentions to carry the war against the Jews beyond Europe never wavered. Ultimately, though, defeat at El Alamein turned the tables and kept the SS from carrying out its plans.

Yet leaving north Africa and the Middle East out of Holocaust history has erased the suffering of many of the Nazis’ victims and obscured the full significance of the victory at El Alamein.

Early in 2021, I received an email from the scientist Michael Bevan, son of Lance Corporal John Bevan of the Second New Zealand Division, who fought and was taken prisoner at El Alamein. “My father always thought they were fighting to preserve the British empire,” he wrote, which for “a colonial was not a high priority.” Only in the winter of 1945 in Germany, when as a prisoner of war his father saw female slave labourers building an airfield, did he fully grasp “the evils he had fought to contain”.

Therefore, the soldier’s son went on, understanding how the Eighth Army “established the El Alamein line”, and thus prevented genocide in the Middle East, “has brought new and deserved honour to the brave men of my father’s generation, who fought and suffered in Egypt.”

For their sake, too, the story must be told. **H**



General Claude Auchinleck, commander-in-chief of the Middle East theatre, in the headquarters of the Eighth Army, June 1942

Of the 2,600 Jews imprisoned at the Giado concentration camp, more than one in five died within months of hunger or typhus

Gershon Gorenberg is an Israeli historian and journalist. His latest book, *War of Shadows: Codebreakers, Spies, and the Secret Struggle to Drive the Nazis from the Middle East*, was published in January by PublicAffairs

When the devil stalked Salem

Courtroom drama

A scene from the Salem witch trials, depicted in a 19th-century lithograph. How two girls' accusations of witchcraft escalated into one of the darkest episodes in early American history has long puzzled historians

Why were 19 people hanged for practising dark magic in 17th-century New England?

Ellie Cawthorne, presenter of a new *HistoryExtra* podcast series on the events of 1692–93, examines six causes of the Salem witch trials

ON THE
HistoryExtra
PODCAST

During the freezing January of 1692, unsettling incidents began to occur in the parsonage of Salem. The Reverend Samuel Parris's 11-year-old niece and nine-year-old daughter – usually well-behaved girls – began to shudder and shake, shrieking, wailing and barking like dogs. A local physician was called in and delivered a damning diagnosis that the girls were not suffering from any standard medical issue, but rather an “evil hand” was at work. By that, the physician meant an agent of the devil. That diagnosis would result in one of the darkest and most bizarre episodes in the early history of the United States.

Keen to discover the perpetrator, a local woman, Mary Sibley, encouraged the parsonage girls to bake a “witchcake”. Soaked in urine and fed to a dog, this folk practice was designed to reveal the identity of the malevolent force behind the young girls’ afflictions. Parris was furious when he learnt of its concoction, later railing at his congregation: “By this means, it seems the devil has been raised amongst us and his rage is vehement and terrible, and when he shall be silenced, the Lord only knows.”

His declaration was to prove eerily prescient. A few days after baking the witchcake, the girls did indeed identify three witches masquerading as marginalised members of their community. News of the outbreak of bad magic spread across the small New England settlement, and so too did seemingly supernatural incidents. More girls suffered from similar fits and convulsions, while others encountered hairy beasts at their firesides or felt themselves pinched and pricked by invisible hands.

The settlers’ firm belief that they were being plagued by agents of Satan was swiftly followed by a desire to root out those responsible and hold

them to account. In May 1692, the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony established a special Court of Oyer and Terminer – meaning “to hear and to determine” – in Salem. Those gathered in the courtroom listened rapt to testimonies that told of flying witches, supernatural beasts and satanic Sabbaths. Suspected witches confessed to eye-raising sins, and named neighbours and family members also in league with the devil. Chaos unfolded in the courtroom as accusers shrieked and moaned, and declared themselves to be tormented or choked by the malign spirits of those on trial.

As the trials progressed, the contagion spread to Salem’s neighbouring communities, but as accusations multiplied into the hundreds, and even the governor’s wife became implicated, those in charge began to have doubts. Could there really be that many witches in New England? By the time the Court of Oyer and Terminer was finally disbanded and the trials fizzled out, the spectacle had dragged on for more than a year. Nineteen “witches” had been hanged, at least five others had died in jail, and one man had been pressed to death with stones for refusing to enter a plea. Dozens more were accused, interrogated and imprisoned.

So how did the strange behaviour of a couple of young girls escalate into a community-wide panic that led to the deaths of 25 people? That’s the subject of our new podcast series, *Salem: Investigating the Witch Trials*. With expert help, I have been uncovering a range of factors that helped fuel an outbreak of paranoia that had deadly consequences – six of which I explore overleaf. From social tensions and religious fervour to a chaotic justice system, they can help us move towards an understanding of why these seemingly inexplicable events took place.



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Bitter conflicts

TOP: An illustration of the battle of Bloody Brook in 1675 during King Philip's War, named after the Wampanoag chief (seen in an 18th-century engraving above). Violence between Native Americans and colonists added to the fears felt within fledgling settlements like Salem

1 Salem's siege mentality

The perils of indigenous violence and bad harvests fostered a climate of intense paranoia

A good place to start when looking for reasons to explain how and why the Salem witch trials happened is the settlement of Salem itself. "This was a precarious society that felt very much under siege," says Stacy Schiff, author of *The Witches: Salem, 1692*. "Every settlement in New England had its encounters with the howling wilderness. Whether wolves, Native Americans or the threat of starvation, they were always sensitive to the dangers looming close to their edges."

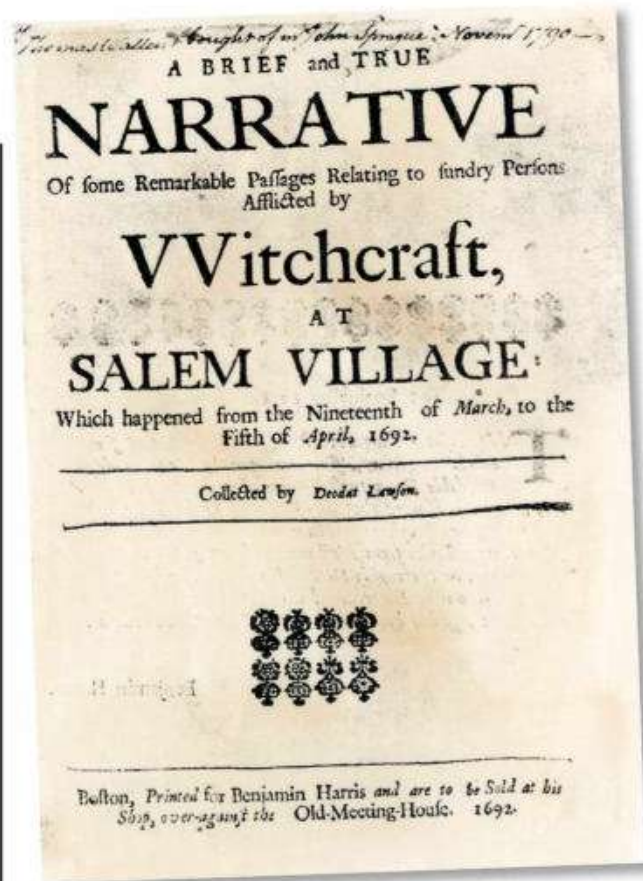
The Salemites had justification to feel this way. "The recent history had been one of serious trauma," says Schiff. From 1675–76, a bitter conflict between settlers and the indigenous population, known as King Philip's or Metacom's War, had claimed the lives of around 10 per cent of New England's adult men. As Schiff puts it: "Almost everyone had known casualties, and society was still bearing scars from those years."

Raids from local Native American tribes (who themselves felt under threat from the colonists) remained a danger to colonial settlements, the fear of which is hinted at in the court records from the witch trials. Under interrogation, suspected witch Mary Toothaker admitted that following nightmares about a Native American attack, she had been seduced into doing a deal with the devil because he promised to "deliver her from the Indians".

It was not only human forces that may have exacerbated stress levels in Salem, but environmental ones too. The witch trials came at the tail end of an especially cold period of the Little Ice Age, characterised by freezing winters and cool wet summers that led to bad harvests. Some historians have linked the hardships this caused to the explosion of witch trials in Europe. The exposed colonial settings only intensified threats posed by poor weather, and colonists would surely have been aware of other settlements suffering badly from shortages of food and resources.

While these pressures cannot explain why Salemites' fears fixated on witchcraft, they can help us understand some of the underlying anxieties that may have made the community more susceptible to escalating paranoia when the first accusations emerged.

The exposed and isolated colonial settings only intensified threats posed by poor weather



Divide and conquer

The title page of former Salem minister Deodat Lawson's 1692 pamphlet on the witchcraft accusations, in which he warns: "Christ's kingdom may be divided against itself, and so be weakened"

2 The mania for spiritual purity

It was the duty of all good Puritans to eliminate threats

First established by religious radicals in search of a New Jerusalem, Salem was a settlement founded on strong Puritan ideals. According to Professor Ronald Hutton, author of *The Witch: A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present*, Puritanism offered "exceptionally fertile soil for witchcraft beliefs to sprout and flourish". One aspect of its theology that played a role here was its emphasis on biblical literalism. The command in the Book of Exodus: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," was taken as a death sentence for suspected witches, and enshrined in the Massachusetts legal code set down in 1641.

The Puritans' origin story was one of persecution. By the 1690s, they still felt under threat as French Catholics

encroached ever closer to Puritan settlements and the religious zeal of the initial settlers had become diluted by generational change. It was part of a good Puritan's duty to seek out and eliminate threats to the spiritual purity of the community, whether external or internal. "They believed that God wanted them to root out people who were rotten and get rid of them," says Professor Marion Gibson, author of the upcoming *Witchcraft: A History in 13 Trials* (due 2023). "You were either with God or against him. It was a very binary way of thinking."

Each church member was expected to pursue an austere lifestyle founded on moral rigour, creating an atmosphere of heightened moral awareness in which the need to monitor and police the behaviours of neighbours increased. "You were not only expected to follow the rules to the letter, but even to think the right thoughts," says Gibson. "This was a community founded on conformity, and it does seem that a number of the accused were known to the community as people who weren't living well in Puritan terms."

Puritan perils

George Henry Boughton's painting from 1867 depicting Puritan settlers going to church was praised for capturing the sombreness of life for those in 17th-century New England



3 Personal grudges turning deadly

Neighbourly disputes may have led to life-threatening accusations

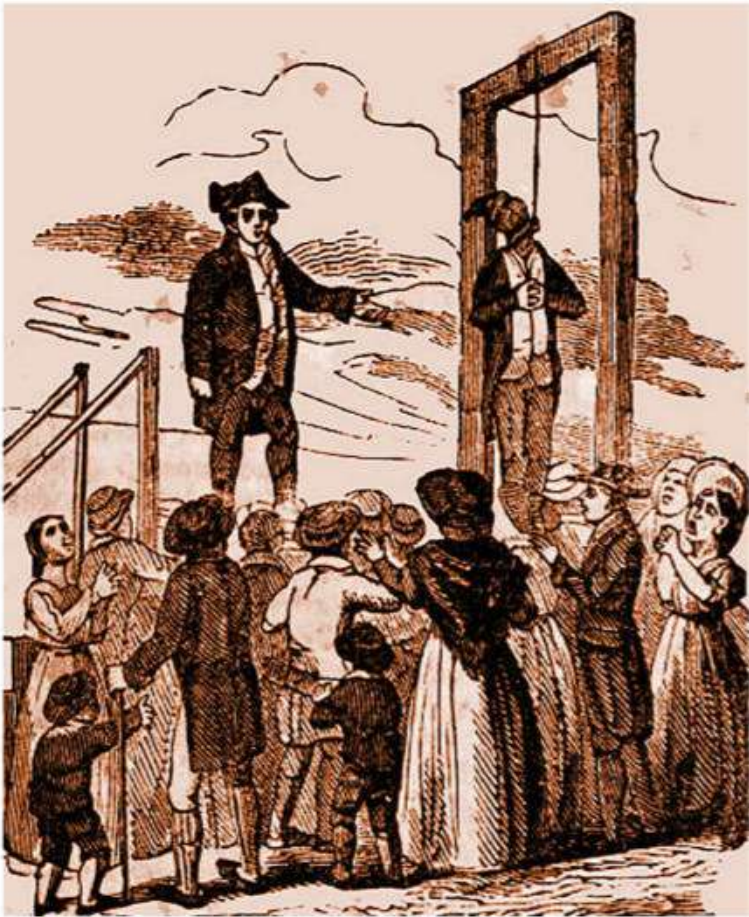
Many of those hauled up before the Court of Oyer and Terminer were already well-versed in the workings of the legal system. Salem’s colourful history of personal disputes, land battles and litigiousness may help explain why neighbours were so quick to turn on each other. “Salem was made up of fractious, hard-headed individuals who liked to argue,” says Professor Marion Gibson. “They had travelled all the way around the world to run their own affairs, so it’s fair to say they were pretty strong minded. And an entire community of people who all hold their own really strong opinions and aren’t shy about expressing them doesn’t always lead to happiness.”

Indeed, several of those executed had been involved in previous conflicts and legal proceedings. Giles Corey – who would end up being pressed to death by stones – had beaten a farmhand to death, while Bridget Bishop, the first to hang, had previously been in court on charges of theft and witchcraft. George Burroughs had made his fair share of enemies during his

three-year tenure as Salem’s minister, failing to repay loans and gaining a reputation for cruelty and domestic violence. The mud clearly stuck. Although Burroughs had not lived in the settlement for nine years by the time that accusations erupted in 1692, 30 people testified at his trial, denouncing him as a wife-murderer who presided over satanic baptisms.

Yet not everyone accused matched the profile of neighbourhood antagonist – some were well-respected members of the community. Magistrates reportedly expressed surprise when the god-fearing Martha Corey was named as a suspect, and several people signed a petition in defence of the elderly Rebecca Nurse, refusing to believe that the matriarch from a prosperous family could possibly be an agent of Satan. Neither was saved from the gallows.

While it’s difficult to pin down the extent to which existing grievances were recycled through the witch trials, this was a clearly a community ready to fracture when the opportunity arose.



Forgive them their sins
An engraving showing the execution of minister George Burroughs, who recited the lord’s prayer before being hanged – something that a witch was supposedly unable to do

Place of execution
Proctor’s Ledge Memorial, where the condemned were hanged as Salemite neighbours turned on each other



4 **A vendetta against women?**

The trials unfolded in a highly patriarchal community

Of the 19 people hanged for witchcraft in Salem, 14 were women. As such, the witch hunt has sometimes been framed as a way for the community to root out difficult women. Some of the accused could be seen to fit into this mould, such as the homeless Sarah Good, who was said to have cursed those who did not help her when she came begging, and Sarah Osborne, who made enemies through legal disputes. Bridget

Bishop, on top of charges of theft and witchcraft, had also been suspected of murdering her first husband.

“Women in Puritan society were disempowered in all sorts of ways,” says Professor Marion Gibson. “When they were denied power by the usual means, people imagined they would seek it in other ways, such as magic.”

Added to this, in the Puritan mindset, women were deemed to be more susceptible to seduction by the devil, according to Gibson. “Witchcraft accusations and demonology books talked a lot about women being weak-willed and having loose tongues, which is a trait associated with Satan. He was known as a silver-tongued wordsmith, dropping words in your ear to make you do bad things.”

Dig a little deeper, though, and the association between witchcraft and women is not so clear cut. “The idea that witch hunting was essentially ‘woman hunting’ – a mechanism used by a male-dominated society to terrify and subdue independent-minded women – has bitten the dust more recently,” says Professor Ronald Hutton. “Because, despite what you might assume, women haven’t always been viewed as the primary creators of dark magic.”

Accusations of witchcraft in places such as Iceland and Normandy overwhelmingly focused on men. Indeed, five of those hanged at Salem were men, and the person deemed the ringleader was the town’s former minister George Burroughs. Even in the subverted world of devil worship, Salem’s women found themselves subjected to a man.



In the Puritan mindset, women were deemed to be more susceptible to seduction by the devil

“Women hunting”?

Witch Hill (The Salem Martyr) by Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1869. Three-quarters of those hanged in Salem were women



5 A credulous judge

The man who presided over the trials condemned the accused to death on the flimsiest of evidence

As accusations multiplied at an alarming rate, William Phips, the newly appointed governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, decided that urgent action was needed to tackle the crisis. On 27 May 1692, he established the Court of Oyer and Terminer, assembling seven “persons of the best prudence and figure that could then be pitched upon” to preside over proceedings, led by head judge, Lieutenant Governor William Stoughton.

From relying on the testimony of children to the use of intimidation and possibly even torture, the list of criticisms that could be levelled at the court is substantial. One of the most damning is that Stoughton admitted “spectral evidence”: testimonies by the victims of torment perpetrated by the accused in a vision or dream. In one such testimony, teenager Mercy Lewis claimed she “saw the apparition of Giles Corey come and afflict me... by times beating me and

almost breaking my back”.

During other trials, chaos broke out as accusers declared themselves being choked, bitten or pinched without ever having been touched. By the time that Governor Phips banned spectral evidence in October 1692, the court had already sentenced 19 people to hang, many on the basis of such testimonies.

One of the difficult things to explain about Salem is the number of people who confessed to witchcraft – and this points to another of the justice system’s critical failings. “Salem was most unusual in that, if people confessed and named others, they were regarded as having to some extent expiated their crime,” says Professor Ronald Hutton. “The court looked more favourably upon them, whereas those who held resiliently to a not-guilty plea were much more likely to be hanged. That’s a poignant situation because it means that those who are most brave are the ones who die.”



Sham trials

TOP: A late 19th-century engraving showing how trial proceedings could descend into hysteria, thanks in part to chief magistrate William Stoughton (above) accepting visions and dreams as “spectral evidence”

6 Fear of the supernatural

Witch trials were powered by terrifying ideas about dark magic

Environmental pressures, social tensions and judicial failings all help explain how and why an outbreak of anxiety erupted, and escalated, but not the shape that it took. Why did Salem's fears fixate on finding witches within their own community?

While it may seem obvious to say that a belief in the supernatural played a major role in the witch trials, the significance and depth of those beliefs should not be underestimated, according to author Stacy Schiff. "It may seem preposterous and far-fetched to us, but for the Salemites in 1692, witchcraft was real. It was a fact of life," she says.

The accusations, trials and executions in Salem came at the end of an era of increased witchcraft persecutions across Europe and North America, leaving the villagers with a melting pot of lurid ideas and imagery to draw on. "When you look at the intellectual, social and cultural world of the 17th century, witchcraft made perfect sense," says Professor Owen Davies, author of *America Bewitched: The Story of Witchcraft After Salem*. "Although events at Salem are often described as hysteria, this wasn't madness, or insanity. The greatest thinkers of the day

believed in witchcraft and tried to make sense of how it happened."

A belief in witchcraft offered the people of Salem an outlet for all sorts of anxieties. It was an instant explanation for a wide range of problems, from troublesome neighbours to the threats facing the religious order. And if there's one thing that speaks to the power of these supernatural beliefs at Salem, it's their ability to outlive the trials themselves. "Everyone was willing to believe that they may have indeed condemned innocents," says Davies. "But no one was willing to entirely let go of the idea of witchcraft for quite some time. The trials may have ended, but the fundamental beliefs in witches endured." **H**

Seeking divine help

A girl is delivered from the devil through the power of prayer in this 19th-century engraving. Witchcraft beliefs endured in America long after events at Salem

An era of increased witchcraft persecution left the villagers with a melting pot of lurid ideas and imagery



A town ripped apart

Gallows Hill in Salem, 1692. It was not until 2001 that all of the men and women convicted of witchcraft and executed at Salem were exonerated



Ellie Cawthorne is podcast editor for HistoryExtra. She is the presenter of new podcast series *Salem: Investigating the Witch Trials*, which is available from Apple Podcasts at <https://apple.co/3irIHpF>



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Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss the **Salem witch trials** in an episode of *In Our Time*. To listen, go to bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b06pxp2z

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MAN WHO INVENTED SCOTLAND?

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

On the 250th anniversary of Walter Scott's birth, **Annika Bautz** argues that Scotland's image in the eyes of the world is partly the product of this brilliant author's pen



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Walter Scott in a c1800 engraving; Glen Coe, one of the jewels of the Highlands; Scottish peasants Effie and Jeanie Deans in a scene from Scott's *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*; Scott's works made locales such as Loch Awe popular as tourist destinations

“Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones.”

So opined Jane Austen in 1814. “It is not fair,” continued the author of the recently, and anonymously, published *Pride and Prejudice*. “He has fame and profit enough as a poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people’s mouths. I do not like him, and do not mean to like *Waverley* if I can help it – but fear I must.”

Austen’s fears were entirely justified. Scott, already a highly celebrated poet who had been offered, but declined, the position of Poet Laureate, published his first work of fiction, *Waverley*, or, *‘Tis Sixty Years Since*, to immediate and unprecedented success. Austen was indeed impressed, and she was far from alone. The first edition of the historical novel about the 1745 Jacobite uprising led by Charles Edward Stuart, better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, sold out in less than a month. A second edition followed suit within weeks. It brought both the author and publisher profits previously unseen in the publishing world.

Waverley launched Scott’s popular career as a novelist. From 1814, he wrote, on average, more than a novel a year, reaching 27 in total, which were published in immensely high print runs by contemporary standards. By the middle of the 19th century, his books had registered sales of more than 2 million, more than twice as many as all other Romantic-period authors put together. Critics regarded Scott, the most famous living novelist of the age, as the equal of Homer.

The influence of this son of an Edinburgh lawyer reached far beyond his death in 1832, inspiring countless paintings, adaptations, illustrations and stories. The librettos of more than 90 operas are based on Scott’s novels and poems; more plays have been adapted from his works than any other writer; and, after the Duke of Wellington, he was the most frequently painted personality in the early 19th century.

Building a nation

Yet this is more than the story of one man’s prodigious talent catapulting him into the literary firmament. It is also the tale of how that talent transformed a nation’s image across the globe. For such was Scott’s cultural impact that, once his novels and poems had become essential reading in locales as distant and diverse as Sydney and Scarborough, Auckland and Arizona, the world would never look on his native

Scotland in the same light again.

At the heart of this fascination with Scott’s Scotland was readers’ romanticisation of the Highlands, which conjured a nostalgia-fuelled vision of dramatic landscapes and mysterious characters far removed from most of their own experiences of life. Soon this idealised vision borne from Scott’s vivid depictions had enveloped all of Scotland, and the nation almost came to be a synonym for the Highlands and a past now lost.

By the mid-19th century, Scotland had become the destination of choice for enthusiasts across the globe determined to experience the places Scott described in his works. Tourism boomed as visitors descended on such locales as Loch Katrine and the Trossachs, the setting for his epic 1810 poem *The Lady of the Lake*. Scott’s publisher Robert Cadell later wrote in his memoirs regarding the poem’s publication: “The whole country rang with praises of the poet – crowds set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine, till then comparatively

unknown; and as the book came out just before the season for excursions, every house and inn in that neighbourhood was crammed with a constant succession of visitors.”

This phenomenon only intensified as more readers were swept away by Scott’s works, and the line between history and historical novel blurred. He wrote, at speed, across several genres – as a poet, critic, editor and novelist – yet his historical novels won the most lasting acclaim. This was, after all, a literary genre that he is often credited with inventing, and while novels set in the past had pre-existed him, Scott was the first to achieve both critical and commercial success on this scale.

Unlike his predecessors, Scott sought to present past societies and characters realistically. He once expressed how he aimed to include “nothing inconsistent with the manners of the age” in his works, while at the same time intending for them to remain novels, not works of history, and so avoid “the repulsive dryness of mere antiquity”. Scott let his characters speak for themselves as part of their historical and cultural context in a variety of regional and social dialects, most notably, of course, those of regions in Scotland. His novels were works of historical period, as much as of class and region.

Class representation

The issue of class, and Scott’s innovative treatment of it, were key to his popularity. As part of his representations of past societies, he included characters from the whole social spectrum, from kings and queens to peasants and Gypsies. Each were given significant parts in the plot, with full emotional and intellectual scope. In *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (see box, right), which is set in the 1730s, the protagonist is Jeanie Deans, a Scottish peasant. When her sister Effie is condemned to die for the supposed murder of her illegitimate child, Jeanie travels to London by herself and on foot to seek a pardon from Caroline of Ansbach, wife of George II.

Jeanie is endowed with qualities not often found in working-class characters before Scott. Contemporary readers praised her “heroic generosity, and most invincible resolution”, and her union of “good sense with strong affections, firm principles and perfect disinterestedness”. Others were surprised at the reaction Jeanie elicited in them. One such reader was the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon, who wrote: “Making Jeanie Deans interesting without personal beauty or youth was an instance of powers unexampled.”

Those “powers unexampled” are exemplified in the pathos and persuasiveness

WALTER SCOTT WAS THE MOST FAMOUS LIVING NOVELIST OF THE AGE, AND CRITICS REGARDED HIM AS THE EQUAL OF HOMER

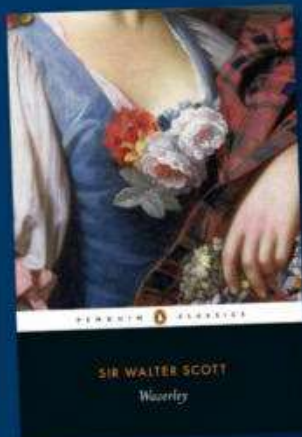


Royal saviour

A portrait of Queen Caroline, who, in *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, is won over by the Scottish peasant Jeanie Deans’ eloquent plea for her sister’s life

SCOTT'S MASTERPIECES

The three novels that did most to catapult the author, and his nation, into the literary firmament



THE DEBUT NOVEL

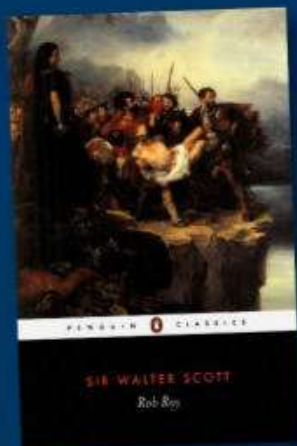
Waverley (1814) focuses on the 1745 Jacobite uprising in favour of the Stuart claimant, Bonnie Prince Charlie, against the existing Hanoverian monarchy.

The novel highlights the heroism and clan spirit of the Highlanders, in comparison to the more disciplined and conventional behaviour of Hanoverians, Lowlanders and English. It also shows the inevitability of progress from a primitive to a more advanced society, but rather than favouring one over the other, Scott creates sympathy for both. He highlights what society has gained by progress but also what it has lost in destroying Highland culture after the defeat of the Jacobite army.



A fond adieu

Waverley charts the failed Jacobite uprising led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, shown bidding farewell to Flora MacDonald in a painting from 1905



THE BESTSELLING NOVEL

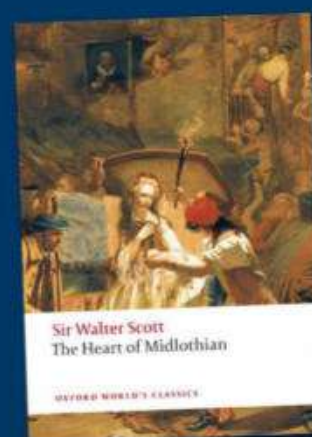
It's hard to overstate **Rob Roy**'s popularity. Against an average print run of 750 copies for contemporary novels, this 1817 work was published in a run of 10,000, which sold out within a fortnight. Entire ship loads of the novel made their way from Edinburgh to London.

Like *Waverley*, *Rob Roy* is a story of clashing cultures, this time against the backdrop of the first Jacobite rebellion of 1715, when Jacobite pretender James Francis Edward Stuart was trying to regain the throne of his deposed father, James II & VII. The protagonist, Frank, a young man without firm allegiances, finds his path as he encounters Jacobites, Hanoverians and, of course, the courageous Highlander Rob Roy.



Shooting star

Liam Neeson plays Rob Roy in a 1995 Hollywood blockbuster inspired by Walter Scott's rip-roaring tale of cultures at war



THE GREATEST NOVEL?

The Heart of Mid-Lothian's main character is an unlikely one by contemporary standards of fiction: a plain peasant girl, without the privileges of class, gender or beauty. The novel, published in 1818, is set against the 1736 Porteous riots in Edinburgh, again highlighting the conflicts between cultures, and the consequences of Scotland being ruled by a government in far-away "Lunnon".

The main plot line is that of Jeanie Deans: her sister is imprisoned and awaits the death penalty for the suspected murder of her illegitimate newborn. To save her, Jeanie travels to London, on foot, to obtain a pardon for her sister from Queen Caroline.



Family support

Jeanie Deans consoles her sister Effie in a 19th-century depiction of Scott's critically acclaimed *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*



Killing fields

Troops clash at Culloden. In *Waverley*, Scott lamented the obliteration of Highland culture in the wake of this crushing defeat for the Jacobite uprising

of Jeanie's speech to Queen Caroline, delivered in broad Scotch: "Save an honest house from dishonour, and an unhappy girl, not 18 years of age, from an early and dreadful death! Alas! It is not when we sleep soft and wake merrily ourselves that we think on other people's sufferings. Our hearts are waxed light within us then, and we are for righting our ain wrangs and fighting our ain battles. But when the hour of trouble comes... Oh, my Leddy, then it isna what we hae dune for ourselfs, but what we hae dune for others, that we think on maist pleasantly."

"This is eloquence," is the queen's response. In fact, Caroline is so impressed by Jeanie's speech that she secures Effie's release.

While the queen and peasant find common ground, Scott's novels are just as often arenas of mistrust and discord. In fact, competing cultures is a constant theme in his works, often the clash between the old and the new; past and progress; or Highland and Lowland Scotland. On the one hand, he advocates progress and sees it as inevitable, but on the other, his works are imbued with a nostalgia for a past that is lost. His writings focus on the consequences of progress, on the friction that occurs when parts of society move at different speeds to others.

Scott's depiction of cultures at different

FOR SCOTT, THE HIGHLANDERS WERE STILL AT THE FEUDAL STAGE, WHEREAS THE LOWLANDERS HAD MOVED ON TO THE AGE OF COMMERCIALISM

stages of development follows the ideas of human society espoused by Scottish Enlightenment philosophers Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, where social groups move through distinct stages, from "savage" and "rude" through "feudal" to a "modern" and "commercial" society. The tensions that this progression creates are the driving force behind *Waverley*, set against the backdrop of a Jacobite rebellion that divided England and Scotland, but also divided Scots among

themselves. Lowlanders generally supported the government of George II, while their Highland compatriots were, for the most part, loyal to the Stuart claimant, Bonnie Prince Charlie.

For Scott, the residents of the Scottish Highlands were still at the feudal stage, whereas the Lowlanders and English had moved on to the age of commercialism. He was at pains, however, not to declare one system inherently better than the other, highlighting the heroism, the clan spirit and the primitive vigour of the Highlanders, in comparison to the more disciplined and conventional behaviour of the Hanoverians, English and Lowlanders.

Clash of cultures

In the opening stages of the 1745 rising, it was the clan spirit that prevailed, the "primitive" Highland clans defeating the modern army of "civilised" Britain. The respectable citizens of Edinburgh had their houses occupied by Highlanders whose "manners" appeared savage and whose Gaelic tongue they found utterly incomprehensible.

The Highlanders' early successes were, however, short-lived. Their rising was to end in bloody defeat at Culloden in April 1746. Having put the Jacobite army to the sword,

the Hanoverian government resolved that there would be no further rebellions. To that end, it disarmed the Highlands, destroyed the system of clanship, removed the power of clan chiefs, and forbade the wearing of distinctive tartans. In short, it forced the Highlanders into a new way of life and it is in the pages of *Waverley* that Scott shows what was lost in the process.

The tragedy that ensues out of this clash of cultures is embodied in the trial of two of *Waverley*'s most charismatic characters: clan chief Fergus MacIvor and his faithful servant Evan Dhu Maccombich. Fergus stands accused of high treason for taking the side of Bonnie Prince Charlie in the rising. Just as Fergus is ready to die for his prince, Evan is ready to die for his chief, even when offered a pardon. When the judge has passed the death sentence and asked each prisoner if they have anything to say in their defence, Fergus declares that he would do the same again, in the knowledge that this means death by hanging and disembowelling the next day.

Yet it is in the exchange between the judge and Evan that the fundamental misunderstandings between the two cultures become most stark. Evan proposes to return home and bring back six members of his clan, including himself, in exchange for Fergus's life, but is greeted with snorts of derision by a court incapable of believing that he would even consider honouring his promise. Evan's response to the court is a mixture of contempt and defiance: "If they laugh because they think I would not keep my word and come back to redeem him, I can tell them they ken neither the heart of a Hielandman, nor the honour of a gentleman," he declared.

In Scott's reading of events, the court has got Evan completely wrong and, in doing so,



Beauty spot

An early 20th-century poster promoting Loch Katrine and the Trossachs, the setting of Scott's 1810 poem *The Lady of the Lake*

has betrayed an uncomfortable truth: loyalty as a value has been lost in a society that is at a different stage of development and is now based not on honour, but rules. As *Waverley* makes abundantly clear, class, politics and history are never far from the surface in Scott's writings – and that is part of the reason for his extraordinary popularity.

Shaping Scotland

There is another powerful ingredient in Scott's success: Scotland. From the courage of the Scottish peasant Jeanie Deans to the

tragedy of the Jacobite uprising, Scott's literary output was shaped indelibly by the nation of his birth. Likewise, surely no other artist has done more to shape views and interpretations of Scotland over the past two centuries than Scott himself.

That this process was already under way during the author's lifetime is demonstrated by the role that Scott played in organising George IV's visit to Scotland in 1822 – the first time a British monarch had travelled north of the border in nearly 200 years. For the occasion, the author asked Scots to descend on Edinburgh dressed in tartan. The king himself even got in on the act, wearing full Highland dress – albeit a kilt that was too short (ending well above the knees) and which revealed his pink tights. More than seven decades after the British government had banned the wearing of tartans, Scott's orchestration of this royal visit played a key role in their rehabilitation as symbols of Scottish culture.

There were other actors behind the Highlands' rise as a popular tourist destination: the shift from classicism towards an appreciation of a less tamed and orderly landscape; Queen Victoria's purchase of Balmoral; the expansion of the railways bringing these once distant locations within reach. But all who benefited from the rise of the Scottish tourist industry – everyone from the owners of inns through to coach, railway and steamer operators – surely owed a debt of thanks to Walter Scott.

Scott's brilliant poems and novels transformed perceptions of Scotland in the 19th century – and they have, to an extent, continued to do so ever since, with a little help from the films, dramas, operas, street names, railway stations, statues, dances and memorabilia that they have generated.

Scott has often been blamed for fostering a view of the nation that is romantic, tartan and kitsch, but no author can be blamed for how their work has been appropriated. Yes, his books depicted the conflict between old and new and lamented what is lost in the development of cultures. But they also acknowledged the inevitability of progress, and the paramount importance of developing with it. **H**



Northern exposure Queen Victoria welcoming Tsar Nicholas II to Balmoral. The royal purchase of the castle in 1852 was one of the ingredients in the Highlands' soaring popularity as a tourist destination

Annika Bautz is a professor of 19th-century literature at the University of Plymouth

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The Man Who Made Scotland:

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Men of No 83 Squadron are all smiles as they pass a Handley Page Hampden bomber at RAF Scampton, Lincolnshire, October 1940



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“With every escape, border guards tightened their security. It was a case of now or never”

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AFRICA

Caesar allegedly vowed to give Egypt away if someone could tell him where the source of its river lay //

Joyce Tyldesley explores a new account of the Nile's long and winding history > page 79

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“Many antiquaries saw in the past threads of narrative that offered hope for the future”

Daisy Hay on a study of how our view of history shifted in the 19th century > page 80

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“Renton joins a growing group of historians charting Scotland's role in Caribbean slavery”

Christienna Fryar rates a look at one family's involvement in the slave trade > page 83

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Alex von Tunzelmann on her new book, *Fallen Idols* > page 74



INTERVIEW / ALEX VON TUNZELMANN

“Debates about statues are often posed in simplistic primary colours”

ALEX VON TUNZELMANN speaks to Matt Elton about her new book, *Fallen Idols*, which explores the stories behind some of history’s most controversial statues – and the reasons that people have wanted to bring them down



Matt Elton: Over the past 18 months, debates about historical statues have reached fever pitch. Why are they so divisive?

Alex von Tunzelmann: Statues are obviously only one form of commemoration of history and our past, but I think they have become so controversial because they’re so visible. Even quite small towns often have some kind of memorial. And people tend to get quite emotionally invested in them because they look like people.

There’s another factor, too. In many European countries, and the United States, a lot of the statues are from the era of colonialism, so they tap directly into current “culture war” debates about the kind of direction we’re going in as a society and how our past plays into that.

Is it revealing that all the statues your book explores are of men?

I deliberately picked 12 men for this book. Most of them are white, too, although there are a few exceptions: [Iraqi leader] Saddam Hussein was Arab, and Rafael Trujillo, the former Dominican dictator, was mixed race despite defining himself as white. The reason for that selection is that the statues erected over the past few hundred years have overwhelmingly been of white men. As I mentioned, they’re contentious partly because many of them date from the high period of colonialism, which for me really ties into the fashionable Victorian idea that history was made by great men. Statues were a visible form of that concept: there was even a period in the late 19th century during which a phenomenon known as “statuemia” saw huge numbers of statues going up all over the world at an incredible rate. The artist Edgar Degas joked that, in Paris, they had to put fences around parks to stop artists from depositing statues, as if they were dogs going to the lavatory.

to stop artists from depositing statues, as if they were dogs going to the lavatory.

How hard was it to pick just 12 statues?

It was so difficult because you quickly realise that there are a lot of statues! I wanted to focus on political statuary, and I wanted to try and keep it within a historical framework that felt contemporary and relevant to today’s world. So even though these debates are extremely old, the book starts with the American Revolution and the pulling down of the statue of George III that occurred in that moment.

That statue of George III was erected and pulled down in the 1770s. What does its story tell us about the relationship between statues and the past?

That example is particularly interesting

because it challenges a lot of current debate about statues. A statue of George III went up in what was then the Province of New York when it was still under British control. But it was actually something of an afterthought. The people of New York had originally wanted to put up a statue of William Pitt, who they considered to be responsible for defending their interests against the British taxation that they considered highly unfair. But putting up a statue of the king’s minister without also having a statue of the king was felt to be bad form and not very patriotic, so they had to put up one of the king as well – hence this statue of George riding a horse and wearing a toga in Bowling Green in New York.

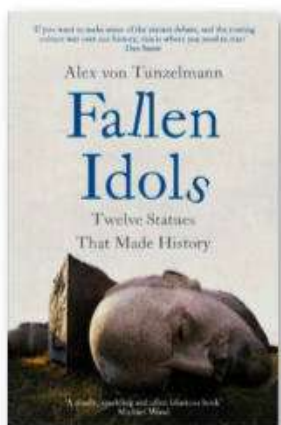
General George Washington read out the Declaration of Independence in New York in 1776, which of course talks a lot about George III as being personally responsible for some of the abuses that New Yorkers felt had been carried out in America. A mob of soldiers, sailors and civilians that had gathered to hear Washington’s speech hurried straight down to Bowling Green, attached ropes to the statue of the king and pulled it down. It was made of lead, so it was quite soft but very, very heavy. Yet they did manage to haul it down and break it into lots of pieces. Many were even melted down and turned into musket balls to be used against the British in the war.

Washington himself seems to have been somewhat unhappy with the fact that his soldiers and sailors had pulled this statue down. But he didn’t say he disapproved of pulling it down – just that he thought the way in which it was done showed a lack of discipline and order.

This story was particularly fascinating in 2020, when Black Lives Matter protests led to people pulling down and attacking Confederate statues in the US. Rightwing commentators at the time suggested that pulling down these statues was an appalling erasing of history – but then, of course, others pointed out that it was the kind of action that was literally the foundation of the nation. The beginning of the War of Independence was the pulling down of a statue. So the context in which a statue went up and in which it was pulled down really matters.

So is it fair to say that you think a statue isn’t in itself history, but rather the events surrounding it and how it is later interpreted?

Yes. People often argue that you can’t pull statues down, because it’s erasing history, but many of us who work in history – and, I’m guessing, many of those reading this interview – think that history is not just contained in lumps of bronze or stone. History is debate and discussion; it’s looking at archives and documents and all kinds of other of sources. A statue, really, is just a piece of propaganda. Some may have artistic merit; some have historical interest for various reasons. Some of the remainders of the George III statue, for instance, sold for a huge sum at auction in 2019 after they were found in a



**Fallen Idols:
Twelve Statues
That Made History**
by Alex von
Tunzelmann
(Headline, 272 pages, £20)

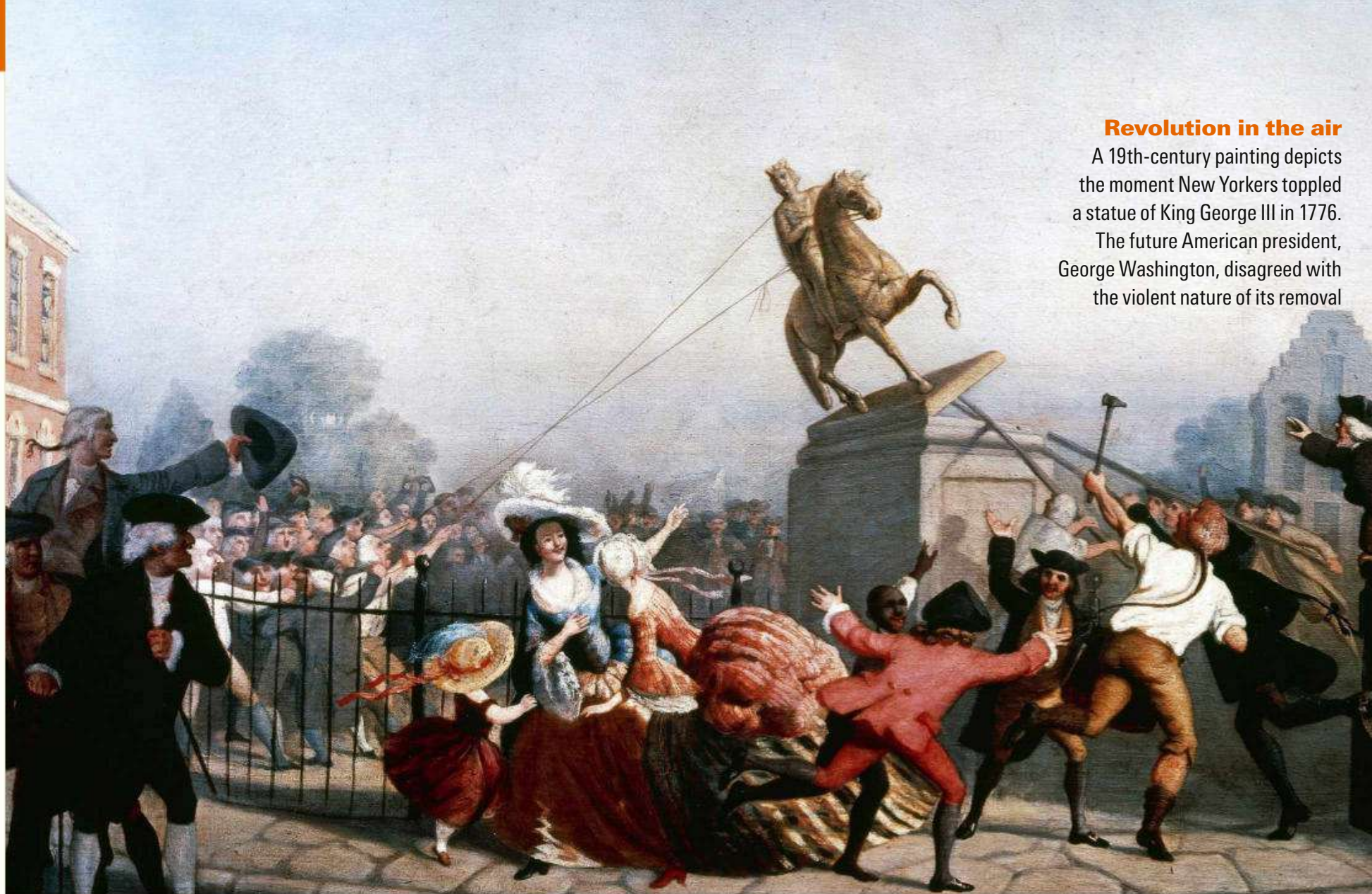


PROFILE

Alex von Tunzelmann is a historian and screenwriter whose previous books include *Blood and Sand: Suez, Hungary and the Crisis that Shook the World* (Simon & Schuster, 2016). She wrote the 2017 feature film *Churchill* as well as episodes of the Netflix historical drama series *Medici*

PHOTOGRAPH BY
FRAN MONKS





Revolution in the air

A 19th-century painting depicts the moment New Yorkers toppled a statue of King George III in 1776.

The future American president, George Washington, disagreed with the violent nature of its removal

garden. The relics of that statue are now considered quite valuable and interesting, and most are in the collection of the New York Historical Society. But the reason they're interesting is because the statue was pulled down, and that it became a symbol of revolution, rather than because the statue itself was of any particular value.

Writing in *The Guardian* in June, columnist and academic Gary Younge argued that Britain has a particular fixation with statues – but I was really struck by how internationally diverse the examples in your book are. Do statues tell us something about Britain's colonial role, or are they a global phenomenon?

Although the modern phenomenon of statuary in Europe and North America has its roots in that colonial period, it's important to remember that the kind of statues we're talking about – honorific portrait statues – are a very old form of commemoration. Even in ancient Egypt, it was common for pharaohs to put up statues of themselves and knock down those of their predecessors to establish their own legitimacy, for instance. And many parts of the world have their own indigenous traditions of statuary.

What has happened since the end of the colonial period has been really interesting, too. Huge numbers of statues went up during the communist period, especially in the former USSR and later in North Korea. Former colonies such as India are fascinating in this regard: the current Indian government has an absolute obsession with putting up

gigantic statues, and has recently built the largest example the world has ever seen. So I don't think you can say any longer that statues are just a colonial or British concern: I think it's a phenomenon that exists in different contexts and traditions all around the world.

Those communist examples are fascinating, particularly the thousands of statues that Stalin ordered to be built of himself. What can we infer from the fact that there were so many, and that so many of them were so massive?

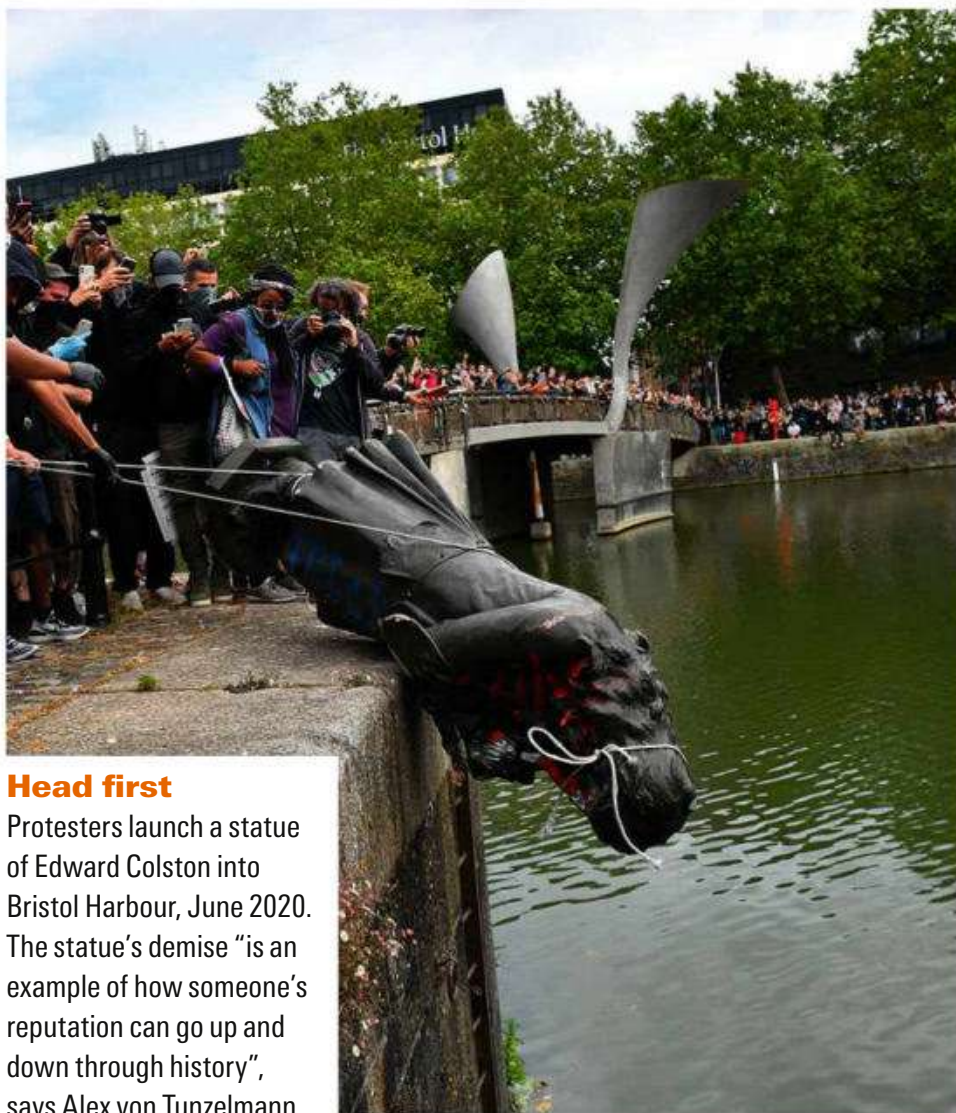
A lot of them were *gigantic*. The Soviets were so into statuary that there are very different stories to tell, and I cover both Lenin and Stalin. Lenin was quite keen not to have statues of himself put up. But after he died, Stalin gradually took over, and he began to put up thousands of statues of Lenin. That was the start of the creation of a cult of personality that Stalin then applied to himself by introducing himself into the iconography. Initially Lenin was the big figure and Stalin was there almost as a pupil, sitting in an inferior position. But that soon changed, and they began to be portrayed as equals before, eventually, Stalin was depicted as a great figure and Lenin as a tiny figure in the background.

This cult of personality is a trait of 20th-century dictators from across the political spectrum. Statues are such an effective part of that because, as I suggested earlier, they really look like people. If you put up a massive statue of Stalin in a city, it brings with it an element of Big Brother: you almost feel that he's there, watching you. Stalin really encouraged people to treat his statues in a quasi-religious manner, as icons. When a huge statue of Stalin went up in Budapest, the city's newspapers told people that, if they had any worries or fears, they should tell the statue about their problems and they would be solved. And I think that's why Stalin used them: they were incredibly effective at extending his presence, impressing and intimidating the population, and creating a quasi-religious incarnation of himself.

Do statues tell us as much about the people who put them up as it does about the people they commemorate?

Yes, and often in quite complicated ways. Stalin was the driving force

// Stalin used statues because they were incredibly effective at extending his presence, intimidating the population and creating a quasi-religious incarnation of himself //



Head first

Protesters launch a statue of Edward Colston into Bristol Harbour, June 2020. The statue's demise "is an example of how someone's reputation can go up and down through history", says Alex von Tunzelmann



Still standing

A statue of Belgium's King Leopold II is left coated in spray paint following a Black Lives Matter protest in Brussels. The monument has long been at the centre of debate about Belgian abuses in the former Congo Free State

behind the programme to put up statues of himself, but that's certainly not always the case. One example of this that has received a lot of attention is the statue of Edward Colston that was pulled down by a public mob in Bristol in 2020 and thrown into the harbour. Colston was a merchant and a great philanthropist in the city, where lots of things were named after him. But he also made an awful lot of money in the slave trade, and it's not as if he was just some kind of passive shareholder: he was effectively CEO of the Royal Africa Company, and instrumental in promoting and expanding the slave trade.

Funnily enough, the story of Colston's statue tracks wider historical shifts. It wasn't erected by him or even in his lifetime, but almost 200 years after he died by a merchant named James Arrowsmith. When it was erected, slavery had become illegal, and in fact the British empire saw itself as being very anti-slavery: the Royal Navy had been going out and fighting it. So even when that statue went up, Colston's history of slave trading was edited out entirely. One speech mentioned the fact that he had made some of his wealth in the West Indies, but that was literally all that was said.

The reason that he was presented as a virtuous son of Bristol was because Arrowsmith was among those who were terribly worried about the rise of socialism. They were trying to present philanthropy as an alternative: responsible, bourgeois citizens who act virtuously to benefit the rest of society. So the statue was very much erected in a 19th-century context of trying to shore up civic society. But then, in the early 20th century, people began to really examine Colston's involvement in the history of slavery, and the conversation started to shift. By the 1990s, there was a loud chorus of people criticising him.

It's an example of how someone's reputation can go up and down throughout history, and how the people erecting a statue can have a very specific agenda that the person the statue depicts would not have recognised at all. Colston lived in a world in which "socialism" just wasn't a word, and he certainly wouldn't have understood the opposition to it – nor why there was so much opposition to his

own career. So the story of his statue reflects big changes in society and thinking.

Are there other statues that you think particularly reflect changing historical and social currents in that way?

Yes, many of them do, and it's fascinating to see the ways in which the meanings and debates surrounding them shift. A good example of this is a pair of identical statues of King Leopold II of the Belgians, who ran the Congo Free State in the late 19th and early 20th century. It's an awful, really upsetting story of mismanagement of what was essentially his private colony. Stories of the abuses that took place there became public, and there was a huge international outcry against him from extremely famous people including Mark Twain, Arthur Conan Doyle and Booker T Washington. The Belgian government removed the Congo Free State from Leopold's control, and he died in disgrace in 1909.

But then the First World War erupted and people's thoughts began to move on. By the 1920s, the Belgian royal family were going to great lengths to try to rehabilitate Leopold's reputation. They suggested that the stories of the abuses in the Congo Free State weren't true, that he was actually a great man, and they began putting up statues of him. Two identical statues were erected in the 1920s: one in Brussels and the other in what was then called Léopoldville, which is now Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC].

The two statues have had very different fates. The campaign to rehabilitate Leopold went really quite well in Belgium, so the one in Brussels stayed up mostly without incident right through until the 1990s. At that point, people started to talk again about what happened in the Congo, and to question whether Leopold was responsible. The subject has now become really controversial, and over the past decade or so the Brussels statue has been so often covered in red paint and graffiti that they must be spending an absolute fortune



A bust of Josef Stalin overlooks his grave in Moscow. The Soviet dictator is known for commissioning countless statues of himself during his lifetime



An ongoing battle

Klansmen are among those in Charlottesville, Virginia protesting the removal of a statue of General Robert E Lee in 2017. Alex von Tunzelmann says that some Confederate statues have become “rallying points” for extremist groups

having to clean it off the whole time. It’s become a real focus for protests, and the Belgian authorities have indicated that they are now seriously considering removing it or at least recontextualising it in some way.

Meanwhile, the statue in the DRC has undergone a different fate. It was pulled down in 1967, soon after the nation gained independence, and dumped behind a shed with a whole load of other colonial statues. But then in 2005, without warning, it went back up. The reason was nothing to do with the Belgians; instead, the then culture minister, Christophe Muzungu, thought that colonial statues were an important part of Congolese heritage, and that it was vital to look at the whole picture, whether good or bad.

This turned out to be a very controversial point of view that almost nobody agreed with, and the statue was pulled down again the same day and removed to the grounds of the national museum in Kinshasa. It just shows how debates around statues often don’t get settled, and the fact that different generations will have different perspectives means that the tides of history will rise and fall. So we should definitely expect that the conversations about these kinds of historical statues will be ongoing.

// I don’t think we need to pull all statues down, but it’s absolutely worth all of us, as communities, having discussions about what we want in our public spaces //

Did your understanding of statues and the debates around them shift as a result of having written this book?

Absolutely. Debates about statues are often posed in very simplistic primary colours: conservatives love statues, progressives hate statues. And of course, that’s not universally true at all. It very much depends on the context. For instance, when people in Ukraine pulled down statues of Lenin in 2014 and 2015, many conservatives rejoiced because they felt that it represented a casting off of the communist past – whereas some progressive commentators weren’t sure how to interpret it. So there are no simple answers, and it certainly isn’t a simple debate. Every statue has a different context and meaning, and they can also come to mean very different things from the original intention when they were erected. Whoever puts them up, the statue exists in a society that changes around them – and these discussions are worth having because they lead us into such fascinating histories.

Some people might argue that we have had plenty of time for conversation about these statues, and now is the moment to just pull them all down. What would your response be?

I come to a different conclusion: I don’t think we need to pull all statues down, but I think that it’s absolutely worth all of us, as communities, having discussions about our values and what represents us and what we want in our public spaces. In my opinion there’s no need to pull down anything that generally gives joy and pleasure. But there are also absolutely cases where these emblems are causing serious hurt, and do need to be looked at: we’ve seen that, for example, in the way in which some Confederate statues in the US have become rallying points for extremist organisations such as the Ku Klux Klan.

In other words, we need to make sure that we do not, as it were, set our entire communities and civic spaces in stone. There’s no beauty in causing pain, and I think that if a statue is causing serious pain, then we need to have a discussion about how to solve that problem.

How would you like people to regard historical statues?

Similar themes emerge in many of these stories, but I’d encourage people to avoid trying to have a one-size-fits-all response. We should think about statues as individual objects with a specific context.

The other key point is that statues are a great way to start exploring history. Very few British people outside Bristol had probably heard of Colston before his statue was pulled down, but we are now having discussions about who he was, what he did, and why his statue went up so much later. That doesn’t necessarily mean we always have to pull down a statue to start a conversation, but I think we can take the opportunity now that these discussions are happening.

There are plenty more controversial statues still standing, too: there’s a campaign now to remove one in Whitehall in London that depicts [18th-century imperial governor] Robert Clive, for instance. Rather than panicking, we should say: “Okay, let’s look again at Clive.” He isn’t taught about very much in schools now, and I suspect that many people wouldn’t be able to tell you much about him – through no fault of their own. So let’s learn more about these kinds of figures, have these discussions, and discover more about our history. 

MORE FROM US

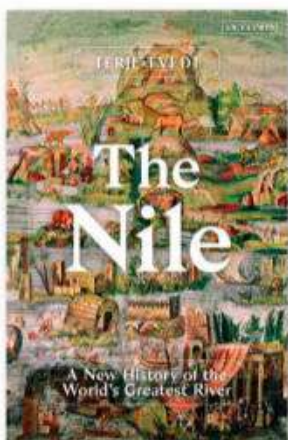
Listen to an extended version of this interview with Alex von Tunzelmann on our podcast at historyextra.com/podcast



AFRICA

Desert flower

JOYCE TYLDESLEY enjoys a wide-ranging, idiosyncratic exploration of the ways in which the river Nile has shaped life throughout Africa across the course of centuries



The Nile: History's Greatest River

by Terje Tvedt

IB Tauris, 400 pages, £30

The Nile has always fascinated western explorers. Julius Caesar allegedly vowed that he would give Egypt away if

only someone could tell him where the source of its river lay. He – again, allegedly – boarded Cleopatra's luxurious barge, hoping to make this momentous discovery himself, but failed in his mission. One can only imagine that he had an enjoyable experience nonetheless.

Later explorers were not so lucky. In 1842, impoverished ultra-runner Mensen Ernst, tempted by the promise of a large reward, determined to run to the source of the Nile fuelled only by biscuits and jam. He made it to Aswan, where he died of dysentery.

Equally determined was the Dutch heiress Alexandrine Tinné; she lost her mother, her aunt and two maids while searching for the river's source, and was eventually hacked to death while crossing the Sahara. In 1862 John Hanning Speke survived attacks, illnesses

and a bout of deafness caused by an unwise decision to use a knife to extract a beetle from his ear, all in order to confirm that the White Nile ran out of the lake which he named Victoria in honour of his queen. He returned home triumphant, only to shoot himself accidentally while trying to bag a partridge at his uncle's estate.

This European obsession with the sources of the Nile puzzled locals, who designated the explorers *mzungu*, or "someone who roams around aimlessly". It may have seemed strange, but it was not pointless. As Terje Tvedt makes clear in this new book, an understanding of the water system allowed control of Africa's longest river.

Fittingly, Tvedt himself is an explorer inspired by the Nile. He guides his readers

// This is a book of history, culture and religion, which seeks to understand the significance of the river from prehistoric times //

Hidden depths

A detail from the c100 BC Nile mosaic of Palestrina depicting the passage of a river that has fascinated adventurers since the days of Julius Caesar

on an epic journey from its Mediterranean mouth to the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, then traces the White and Blue Niles to their sources. Tvedt is a geographer who specialises in waterways and so, as we might expect, he provides enough facts and figures to please any hydrologist. But Tvedt is also a historian and a political scientist, and he has written far more than a geography textbook. His is a book of history, culture, religion and water imperialism, which seeks to understand the significance of the river from prehistoric times to the modern day. It is a very personal account packed with quirky observations and digressions. A glimpse of a beetle prompts musings on divine scarab god Khepri. A visit to Alexandria inspires a reference to Thales of Miletus, whom Aristotle described as the first natural philosopher (and Plato describes falling down a well while distracted by the stars). A consideration of the politics underpinning the building of the Aswan High Dam throughout the 1960s segues naturally into a discussion of Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum and her famous song *Tahwil al-Nil* or "The Transformation of the Nile".

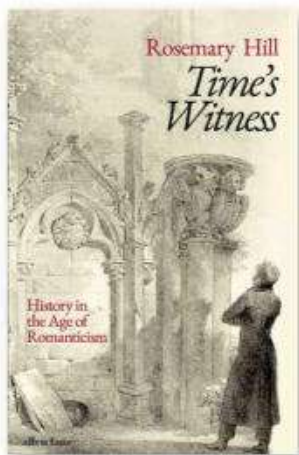
As always, in any book that covers many centuries of history spread over a vast area, it is possible to find minor errors, to quibble with interpretations and to wish that certain sections were more detailed. This does not detract from the pleasure of reading Tvedt's thoughts. This book sparks the imagination, encouraging readers to discover more about lives lived along the Nile, past and present. **H**

Joyce Tyllesley is professor of Egyptology at the University of Manchester

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The past inside the present

DAISY HAY praises a look at how an unlikely company of 18th and 19th-century scholars, writers and artists reconsidered our relationship with history



Time's Witness: History in the Age of Romanticism
by Rosemary Hill
Allen Lane, 416 pages, £25

"The history we have," Rosemary Hill writes in her preface to *Time's Witness*, "is the history we

want. It is the picture we choose to see in the clouds." Hill's book accordingly recreates, in magnificent detail, the cloud pictures conjured into being by the historians, writers, architects, artists and, above all, antiquaries who, between 1789 and 1851, reimagined the relationship between past and present in both Britain and France.

In the years following the French Revolution, history was reborn, in Hill's words, as a "lived relationship with the past": as the space in which the Romantic imagination could take flight, and where fact and fiction might meet. Thus in novels and through the orchestration of technical pageants on the streets of Edinburgh, Walter Scott presented a vision for the future of the Union infused with a reconceived version of Scottish history. In France in the 1790s, the Bayeux Tapestry had a narrow escape at the hands of revolutionaries who opposed its celebration of conquering kings, but within two decades it had been reinvented as a Napoleonic totem of France's supremacy. Hill tells the stories of some of the people in both countries who uncovered the physical traces of the past and reimagined it in active dialogue with the present.

Antiquarianism, Hill reveals, was never merely a marginal pursuit of leisured men. Many of the antiquaries whose stories she tells were socially and politically marginal, but they saw in the past threads of narrative that offered hope for the future. The version of British history uncovered by the labours of the antiquaries had particular meaning for Catholics excluded

Although antiquaries faded from view, their version of history was reborn in the historiography of the second half of the 20th century

Hope in history

An ornate carving on the entrance to the Society of Antiquaries in London. Antiquarianism offered marginalised groups hope for the future, writes Daisy Hill



from the institutions of state by Protestant legislation during the 1660s and 1670s, and for the Jacobites whose hopes for the restoration of their monarch and their heritage died on the field of Culloden in 1746. Protestant nonconformists barred from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge could seek out like-minded scholars at the Society of Antiquaries, a body that was also surprisingly receptive to the work of women.

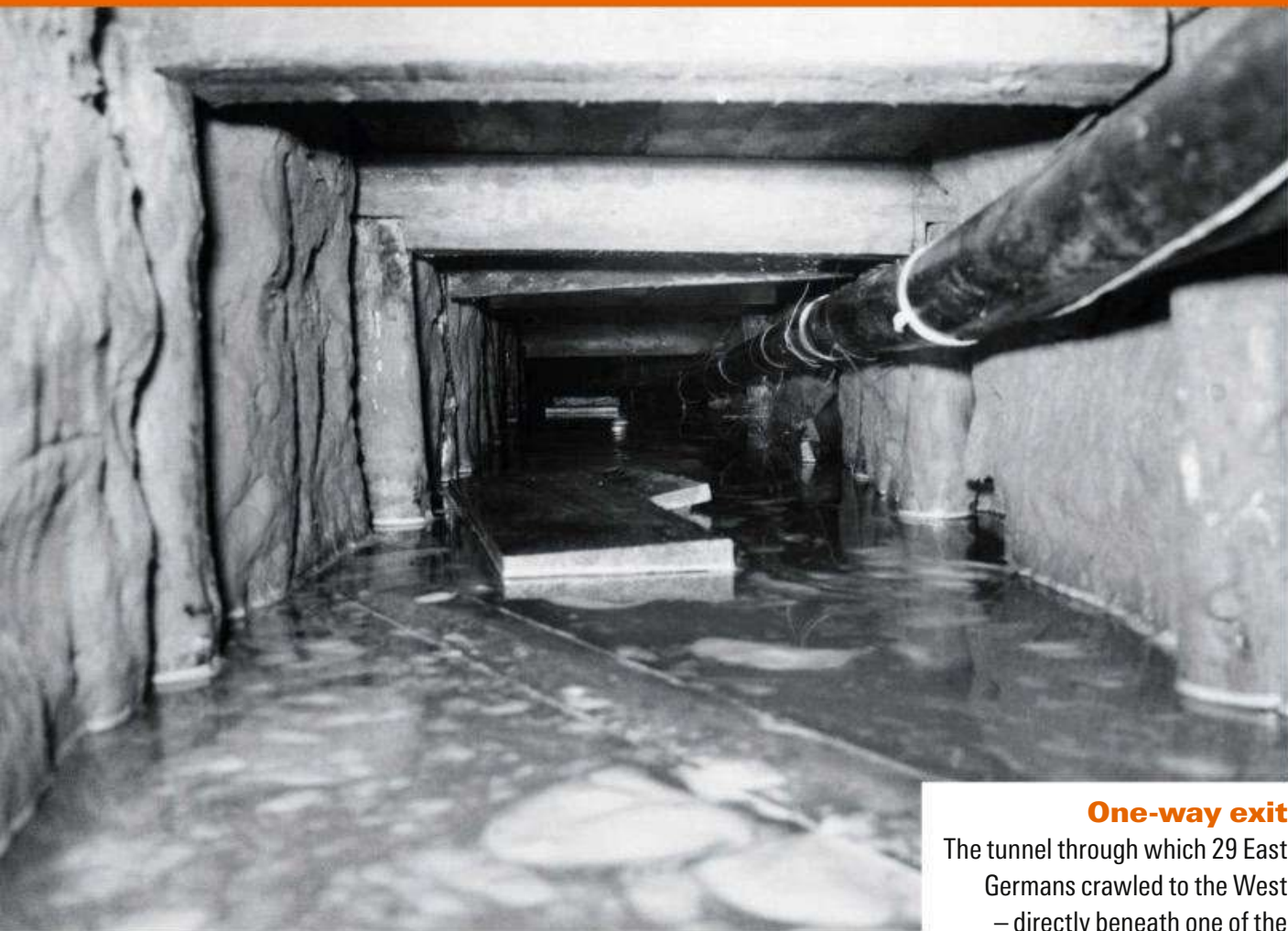
It was not the case, however, that the world of antiquarianism offered a retreat from storm and tempest for those who sought its comforts. Scott memorably described it as "bitchiferous", and was also quick to detect a politicised strain of nationalism in the scholarly preoccupations of his fellow enthusiasts. Scott features largely in Hill's study because he succeeded in capturing the mood of Romantic antiquarianism in his 1816 novel *The Antiquary* as well as in his own practice. Hill contrasts the hero of *The Antiquary*, Jonathan Oldbuck, with the grim figure of Edward Casaubon in George Eliot's classic *Middlemarch* to

demonstrate the decline in the cultural supremacy of the antiquary between 1816, when Scott's portrait was published, and the early 1870s, when *Middlemarch* appeared.

By the second half of the 19th century, Hill concludes, "the past became fixed and was carried into the new, professional institutions whose doors closed against the antiquaries". Although the antiquaries faded from view, their version of history – animated always by the preoccupations of the present, encoded in objects and buildings as well as on paper – would be reborn in the historiography of the second half of the 20th century. It also emerges with particular distinction here, in the work of Hill herself. **H**

Daisy Hay is associate professor in English literature and life writing at the University of Exeter

➤ Turn to page 66 for our feature on how **Walter Scott** shaped modern Scotland



One-way exit

The tunnel through which 29 East Germans crawled to the West – directly beneath one of the most heavily guarded sections of the Berlin Wall – in 1962

COLD WAR

Digging for freedom

HESTER VAIZEY on a dramatic retelling of an attempt to escape from East Germany under the Berlin Wall



Tunnel 29: The True Story of an Extraordinary Escape Beneath the Berlin Wall

by Helena Merriman
Hodder & Stoughton,
336 pages, £20

Joachim Rudolph was
22 years old in 1961

when his carefree summer holiday was interrupted by the news that Berlin had been split in two. He quickly came to the conclusion that he could not stay in the East, penned in, as it now was, by a wall. He had to leave, but it was unclear how he could do so – and the window of opportunity was shrinking fast. With every escape, border guards tightened their security. It was a case of now or never.

Cycling along the border with a school friend, the duo concluded that no escape attempt was going to be perfect – but that they should go for it anyway. Crawling across a field in the middle of the night – watchtower looming up ahead – they then waded across a

river into West Germany. They had risked their lives, and it had paid off.

This new book, which accompanies a recent BBC Radio 4 series, allows readers to slip into Joachim's shoes as if living this extraordinary experience. And it doesn't end there, either: instead of simply enjoying a quiet life in the West, where he was studying engineering, Joachim became a central player in the risky business of building an escape tunnel from West Berlin into East Berlin.

Along with a handful of others, who were keen to bring family, friends and lovers across the border, they set about digging a tunnel the length of a football pitch right under the noses of the heavily guarded section of the wall near Bernauer Strasse – the site of many other escape attempts. After multiple setbacks and huge risks, 29 East Germans successfully crawled through dirt and water to reach the western entrance to the tunnel.

This is a remarkable tale, beautifully told and utterly compelling. **H**

Hester Vaizey is the author of *Born in the GDR: Living in the Shadow of the Wall* (Oxford University Press, 2014)

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

Raphael Cormack on the golden age of Cairo's nightlife

"If you went on a night out in Cairo's downtown Az-bakeya district in the 1920s, you'd encounter an amazing mix of things, from a Parisian-style opera house to music halls, smoky nightclubs and Egyptian-style Arabic cabarets with variety floor-shows. There was a little bit of everything for everyone. And what really struck me is that so many of these cabaret, theatre and nightlife venues were run by women."



Susan Tomes on the history of piano music

"One often gets the feeling that composers from the past would have liked to hear their music played on our modern pianos. It seems as though they envisaged a greater range of tone colours than was available from the instruments of the time. It's not exactly that they are writing for the future, but more like they somehow built into their musical conception the possibility that there would be a greater range of tone, colour and volume available on the instruments of the future."



Michael Dobbs on his new account of the Watergate scandal

"My story begins in January 1973, when Richard Nixon was about to be inaugurated as president for the second time. He was really at the top of his game: he had an approval rating of about 67 per cent, and had largely put the Watergate scandal behind him."



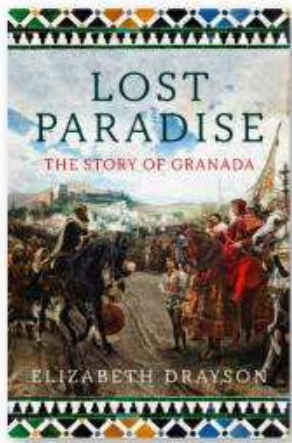
Everything was looking good for him – and then, within the next three months, it all fell apart."



SPAIN

A love letter to Granada

STEPHANIE CAVANAUGH on a paean to a city that forces readers to reappraise the relationship between east and west, Islam and Christianity



Lost Paradise: The Story of Granada
by Elizabeth Drayson
Apollo, 480 pages, £35

Every place has a history, but only some inhabit our collective imagination in extraordinary ways.

Lost Paradise explains how Granada looms large in shared historical memories and examines what this Iberian city's history can reveal about our relationship with the past.

Elizabeth Drayson, emeritus fellow in Spanish at the University of Cambridge, brings her expertise in the literary and cultural histories of Spain to this sweeping account organised into four ages. The first covers ancient and Roman Iberia, the medieval Visigothic and Islamic periods, Jewish society, and ends with the Catholic conquest of Muslim Granada in 1492 – the loss at the centre of the book's titular theme. The second age investigates attempts to Christianise Granada and its Morisco (Muslims who had been compelled to convert to Catholicism) inhabitants between 1492 and 1700, as well as telling the story of Romani people and flamenco music in the city's Sacromonte neighbourhood.

The third covers 1700–1950, from the War of Succession to after the Civil War, addressing themes of modernisation and the roles of Granadan women over the preceding centuries. A final section on 1950 to the present day examines how a modern city conceives of its past after the fall of a dictatorship.

Drayson traces change and continuity throughout, often drawing connections to Muslim-Christian encounters surrounding the conquest of 1492, the temporal centre of the book. These stories are illustrated through a variety of documentary, visual and material sources, such as ancient sandals made of esparto grass, a 14th-century astrolabe, the Alhambra decree expelling the Jews from Spain, a 19th-century photograph of a solemn-faced bullfighter, and Muslim women at prayer in 21st-century Granada.

Throughout, Granada is revealed to be more than a city. It is a symbol, a crossroads, a frontier – one that's claimed by many communities. This celebrated European city remains a Muslim and Catholic space, forcing reflection on common assumptions about the boundaries between east and west, and the place of Islam in Europe.

Conquest, violence and religious intolerance are undeniable in the history of Granada, yet the city's past also provides powerful evidence of plurality and integration. While demonstrating this, *Lost Paradise* sometimes reproduces the clash-of-civilisations model that underpins longstanding notions of Islam

and the west standing in opposition. One point of criticism is a noticeable imbalance in the descriptive language used to portray Muslims and Christians, which veers into orientalist tropes. These include references to “fierce and puritanical Berber tribespeople”, and “fierce, veiled Islamic warriors from north Africa”. Drayson also employs the term “gypsy” in passages on Romani people: while still used in this field of scholarship, this is considered by some to be a racial slur. The book otherwise treats the histories of these communities respectfully and would benefit from updated language.

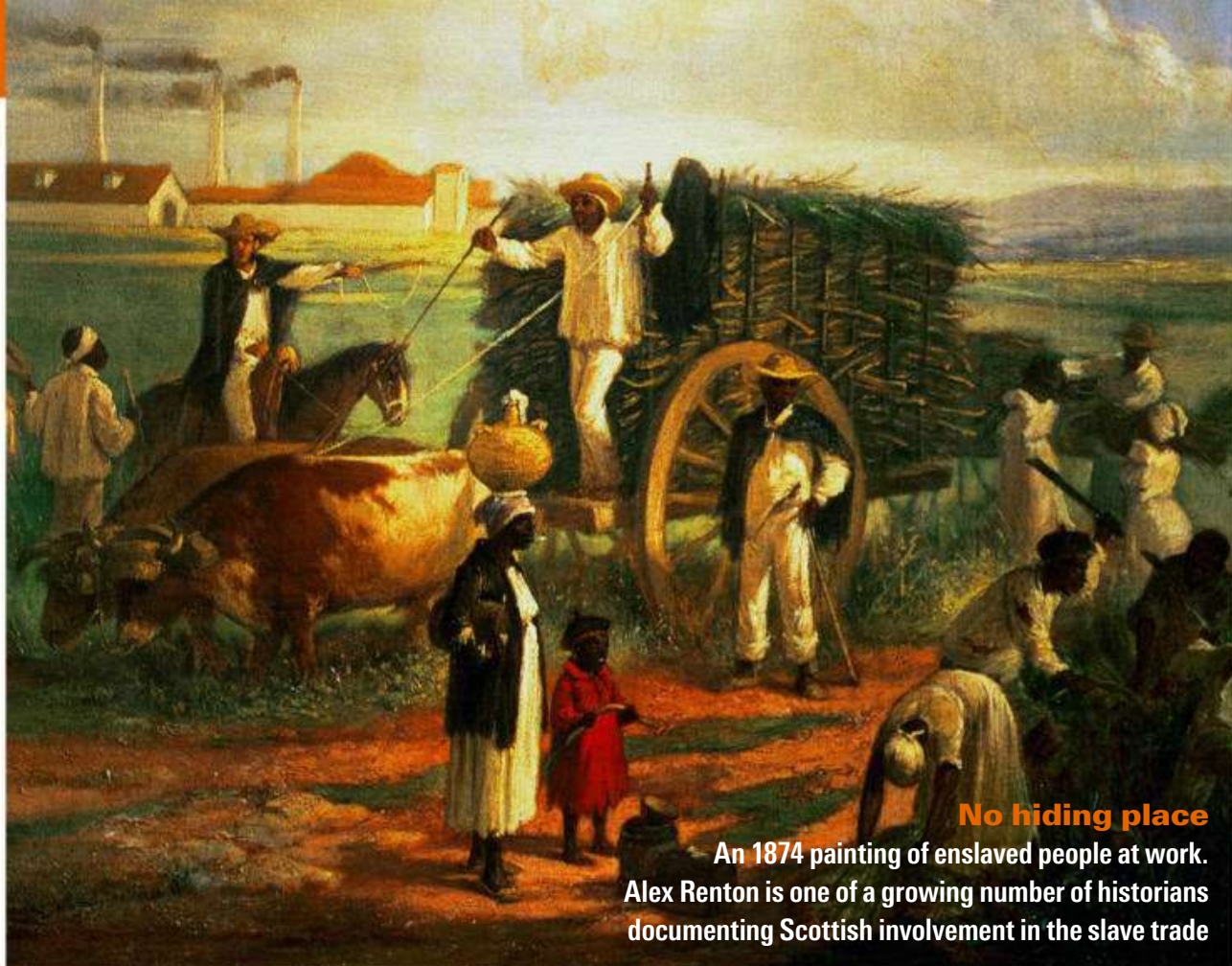
Despite these reservations, *Lost Paradise* is an admirable achievement – not only for being the first full history of Granada written in English addressing a wide audience, but also for truly capturing the imagination. With her expertise as a scholar and her command as a storyteller, Drayson delivers a fascinating study that is part love letter to a city, part commentary on how memory is a force that impacts each successive age. **H**

Stephanie Cavanaugh is Sir John Elliott Junior Research Fellow in Spanish History at Exeter College, University of Oxford

// Granada is revealed to be more than a city. It is a symbol, a crossroads, a frontier – one claimed by many communities //



Meeting of minds An ornate painting in the Hall of the Kings in the Alhambra. A new book “provides powerful evidence of plurality and integration” in Grenada, writes Stephanie Cavanaugh

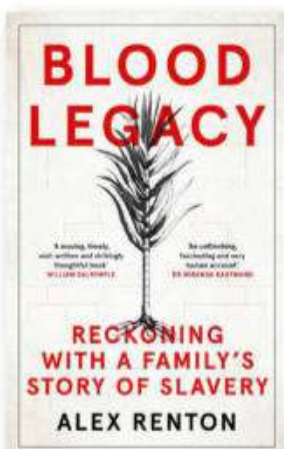


No hiding place
An 1874 painting of enslaved people at work. Alex Renton is one of a growing number of historians documenting Scottish involvement in the slave trade

SLAVE TRADE

Family secrets

CHRISTIENNA FRYAR on an exploration of one family's links to the slave trade, which adds new facets to the wider story



Blood Legacy: Reckoning with a Family's Story of Slavery

by Alex Renton
Canongate, 400 pages,
£16.99

Journalist Alex Renton's *Blood Legacy* is a timely interven-

tion into recent debates about Britain's history as a slavery nation. From the 1760s until the 19th century, the Fergussons, a Scottish aristocratic family and Renton's ancestors, owned plantations and enslaved people in the Caribbean. *Blood Legacy* is the story of their failed coffee and indigo plantation in Tobago and the moderately successful Rozelle sugar estate in Jamaica.

Renton tells this story using the Fergussons' family papers, especially the records of family patriarch Sir Adam, an absentee planter who appears to never have travelled to the Caribbean. Although Renton's grandfather, a former keeper of the records at the National Archives of Scotland, carefully catalogued the Fergusson papers, the plantations and their horrors had been left out of

family lore. The Fergussons' squeamishness about this history mirrors that both of wider Scotland and the UK. Indeed, that this is a Scottish story is important, as Renton joins a growing group of historians charting Scotland's involvement in Caribbean slavery.

Blood Legacy is a well-told narrative of a British family's involvement in slavery, but the book is essential reading for another reason. Hidden in the Fergusson papers, Renton found the dictated testimony of Augustus Thomson (known from birth as "Caesar"). An enslaved doctor and veterinarian, Thomson had fled the Rozelle plantation before travelling to London to appeal directly to the Fergussons. Such testimony is precious, as Renton realises, because there are very few direct testimonies or narratives from enslaved people in the Caribbean, and even fewer for the 18th century – and this is the first time that Thomson's letter has been published. One wonders how many enslaved people's testimonies may well be lurking in other families' papers, in both archives and private collections. **H**

Christienna Fryar is lecturer in Black British history at Goldsmiths, University of London

ON THE
HistoryExtra
PODCAST

FROM FACT TO FICTION

Sister act

Claire Heywood on her new retelling of the Trojan War myth

What inspired you to tell a story based in the world of Greek myth?

I have loved myths since I was a child, but as I grew older and came to study them at university I realised that the women in these stories often come off very badly – either as victims or as villains. I was inspired to write *Daughters of Sparta* after seeing how two key female characters – Helen and Klytemnestra – had been vilified by ancient (male) writers. I wanted to tell a version of their story that would vindicate them, or at least make them more human.

How close do you stick to the traditional story and its characters?

While I used the traditional myth as my frame, I was also aiming to tell a historicised version of it – in other words, a story that could have taken place in the real Greek Bronze Age. Elements of the myth that were supernatural or simply implausible therefore had to be explained in different ways. I was also telling the story from a very particular perspective. So rather than focusing on the struggles between male warriors, as many previous versions have done, *Daughters of Sparta* imagines the private experiences of Helen and Klytemnestra, which we hear little about in the traditional narrative.

Why do you think Greek myth continues to resonate in the 21st century?

I think it's because, alongside all the gods and monsters and fantastical events, these stories contain a great amount of humanity. You can read a passage from Homer or a speech from Euripides, for instance, and find a common sympathy that stretches across millennia. Although these ancient stories are far removed from our modern lives, they can still capture something familiar, and I hope that *Daughters of Sparta* does just that.

Daughters of Sparta

by Claire Heywood

Hodder & Stoughton, 352 pages, £16.99



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Voices of the past



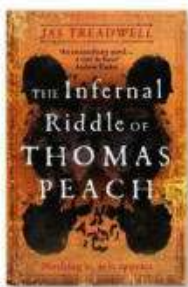
The HistoryExtra podcast, from *BBC History Magazine*, is released up to seven times a week and has recently topped 100 million downloads. It features interviews with world-leading experts on topics spanning ancient history through to the world wars and beyond. Why not check it out today, and explore our archive of over 1,000 previous episodes.

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FICTION

The Infernal Riddle of Thomas Peach

by Jas Treadwell
(Hodder & Stoughton,
464 pages, £16.99)

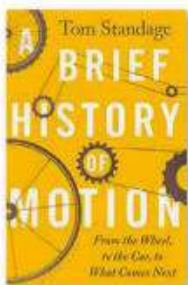
**A riddle wrapped in a mystery**

In 1785, a Somerset village acquires a secretive new resident – one Thomas Peach, armed with a curious locked chest and a wife suffering from an unknown ailment. Throw in an encounter with a woman said to be possessed by demons, and the mystery surrounding Peach deepens. Addressing the reader in an ornate 18th-century style, Treadwell's novel is a neat homage to the literature of the time.

TECHNOLOGY

A Brief History of Motion: From the Wheel, to the Car, to What Comes Next

by Tom Standage
(Bloomsbury, 272 pages, £20)

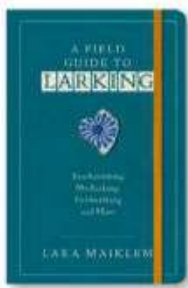
**Reinventing the wheel**

From chariots of the ancient world to the cars we drive today, Tom Standage's new book charts the enormous, transformative impact of wheeled vehicles on societies through history. En route, he powers past bizarre precursors to the bicycle, horseless carriages and how automobiles helped create suburbia, eventually reflecting on what travel in a post-car future might look like.

HERITAGE

A Field Guide to Larking

by Lara Maiklem
(Bloomsbury, 256 pages, £14.99)

**Hidden in plain sight**

Following on from her 2019 bestseller *Mudlarking*, Lara Maiklem moves beyond the Thames riverbank in search of treasures from the past. This charming and interactive illustrated guide is designed to help readers with everything from fossil hunting and scouring fields for historical finds (known as "field larking"), to identifying fragments of Roman pottery and uncovering history hidden in your own home.

STUART

William III: From Prince of Orange to King of England

by William Pull
(Unicorn, 576 pages, £25)

**The making of a monarch**

When you read about William III (in English history at least), it's often in conjunction with his wife and co-ruler, Mary II. This new book from William Pull acts as a prequel to that story, tracing his journey from "cosmopolitan European aristocrat" to the throne of England. It reveals a canny political operator who used diplomatic connections to manoeuvre his way to the top.

SOCIAL HISTORY

The Story of Work: A New History of Humankind

by Jan Lucassen
(Yale, 544 pages, £25)

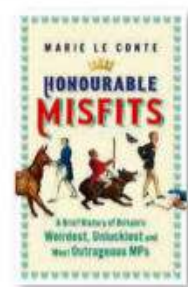
**Employment record**

Chronicling the ways in which wage labour has fitted into the lives of people across a vast sweep of time, this is heady, intellectual stuff (fans of big-picture history know they're in for a treat when a single chapter spans a thousand years). But it's also pleasingly diverse, thoughtfully considering case studies from a range of cultures and the divergent experiences of men and women around the world.

POLITICS

Honourable Misfits

by Marie Le Conte
(John Murray, 224 pages, £14.99)

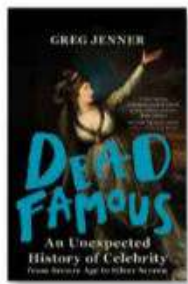
**Cabinet of curiosities**

This book's subtitle – "A Brief History of Britain's Weirdest, Unluckiest and Most Outrageous MPs" – gives a fair sense of its scope and tone. Comprising 64 brief biographies of parliament's more outré characters (one liked to hunt naked; another used unconventional tactics to halt animal cruelty), its breakneck pace belies tales tinged with sadness. Yet this remains a lively celebration of British eccentricity.

CELEBRITY

Dead Famous

by Greg Jenner
(Weidenfeld & Nicholson,
416 pages, £9.99)

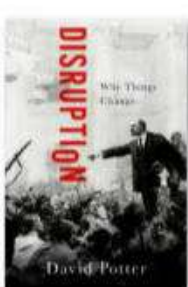
**Who wants to live forever?**

Historian and broadcaster Greg Jenner explores the changing nature of fame in this entertaining book, newly available in paperback. From stars of the ancient world to 18th-century performers and courtesans, Jenner profiles historical figures who have achieved cultural immortality – and, by identifying the forces and currents that swept them into the public eye, reveals much about how today's world was made.

SOCIAL HISTORY

Disruption: Why Things Change

by David Potter
(Oxford University Press,
192 pages, £21.99)

**Constants are changing**

Throughout the past five years we've heard much about "disruptors" – political figures on both sides of the Atlantic shaking up the status quo or bringing fringe ideas into the mainstream. This book sets this idea back into its longer historical perspective, examining episodes such as the Protestant Reformation and the rise of Bolshevism to chart the cyclical process via which political and social change occurs. **H**

WORDS BY ELLIE CAWTHORNE AND MATT ELTON

ALSO ON THE BOOKSHELF

Superhero origin story

The round table takes centre stage in *The Green Knight*, a summer blockbuster charting the escapades of King Arthur's nephew Gawain



ENCOUNTERS

86 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / VISIT

By Jonathan Wright, Rhiannon Davies and Rachel Dickens

94 EXPLORE... Stockport Air Raid Shelters

WATCH

Action and consequences

The 14th-century chivalric romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is, says American writer-director David Lowery, "so rich, so overflowing with meaning and symbolism, that one could make a dozen adaptations of it and still not quite capture what makes it so vital".

He hasn't let this stop him trying as, in a special-effects-laden fantasy that plays out almost as a superhero origin story, Dev Patel (*The Personal History of David Copperfield*) stars as King Arthur's nephew, Gawain. He's an impetuous young man who lands himself in trouble after an encounter

with an eldritch figure who turns up at Camelot, passing through to issue a fateful dare.

What follows is a drama that touches on privilege, masculinity and our relationship with nature – and which, pleasingly, features a talking fox. A strong supporting cast includes Alicia Vikander (*Tomb Raider*) in a dual role, and Sarita Choudhury as Gawain's mother, a character who intentionally calls to mind Morgan le Fay.

The Green Knight

In cinemas from Friday 6 August



The Field of the Cloth of Gold was the site of feasting, dancing, diplomacy and – as this foot-combat helmet suggests – sporting contests

VISIT

Opulence and intrigue

In June 1520 two ambitious young monarchs – King Henry VIII of England and Francis I of France – met near Calais for a diplomatic summit and tournament in an attempt to secure peace in Europe. The 18-day event featured lavish feasts, magnificent temporary palaces and grand sporting contests, all part of the intricate diplomatic manoeuvrings that were taking place behind the scenes.

The extravaganza is retold in a new display from the Royal Armouries, which includes two full armours belonging to and worn by Henry VIII, as well as a host of other fascinating pieces related to jousting, foot combat and the pageantry of Tudor diplomacy.

Tudor Power & Glory: Field of the Cloth of Gold

Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds / Open now / Booking required / royalarmouries.org

WATCH

A grim end to the sixties

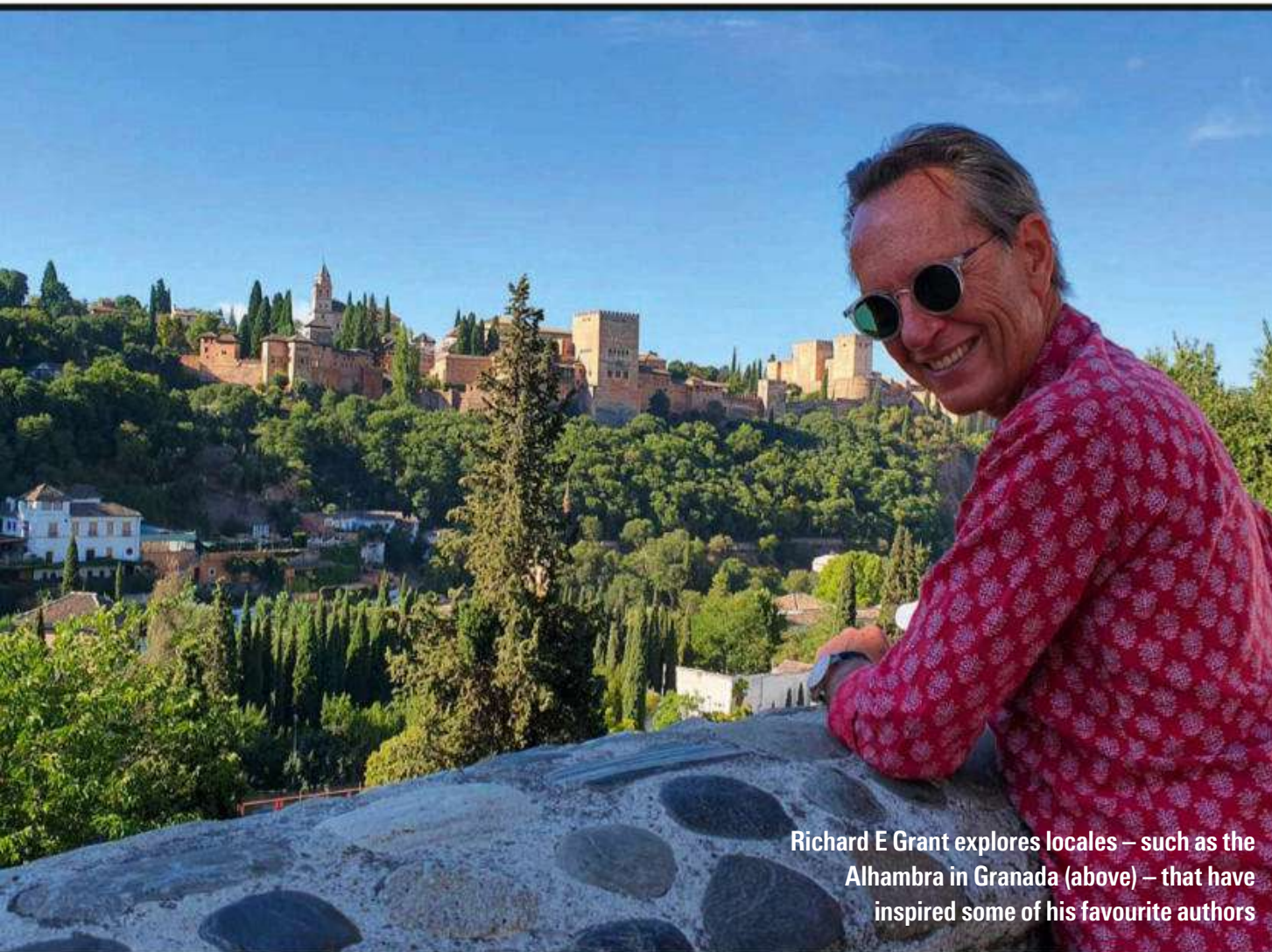
On 29 December 1969, Australian housewife Muriel McKay was kidnapped from her home in Wimbledon. Married to Alick McKay, Rupert Murdoch's trusted deputy at News International, it had been wrongly assumed she was the media tycoon's wife. A ransom demand followed, but Muriel was never seen again.

So what really happened in a case that resulted in two Indo-Trinidadian brothers, Arthur and Nizamodeen Hosein, being convicted of murder? In a feature-length documentary, a key figure in the case gives his account of what occurred. It's a programme that has much to say about changes in society as the 1960s gave way to the 1970s.

The Wimbledon Kidnapping

Sky Documentaries / August

Muriel McKay was murdered by brothers who apparently believed she was Rupert Murdoch's wife



Richard E Grant explores locales – such as the Alhambra in Granada (above) – that have inspired some of his favourite authors

WATCH

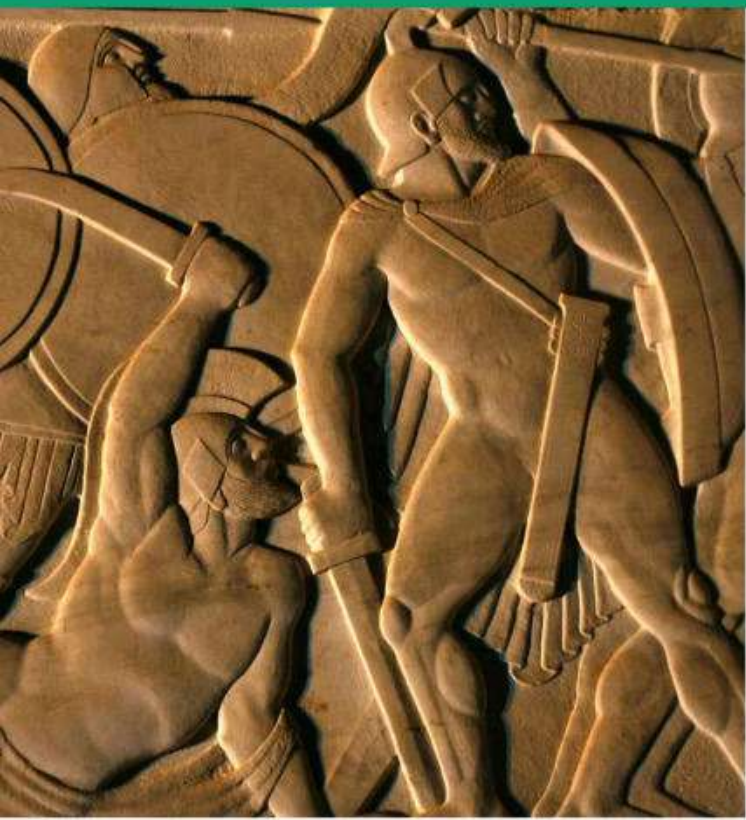
A sense of place

Actor Richard E Grant combines two of his passions, books and travel, as he visits places that have inspired writers. In the first of three episodes, he heads for southern Italy. Here, his stops include Positano, where American crime writer Patricia Highsmith created Tom Ripley after watching "a solitary young man in shorts and sandals with a towel flung over his shoulder, making his way along the beach".

The second and third episodes find Grant, respectively, in southern France and southern Spain. The writers whose work he explores include Alexandre Dumas, F Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and, chronicler of the dark side of Marbella in *Cocaine Nights*, JG Ballard.

Write Around the World With Richard E Grant

BBC Four and BBC iPlayer / Tuesday 3 August



A detail from a marble frieze depicting the Spartans' heroics at the 480 BC battle of Thermopylae

LISTEN

History's greatest last stand?

It's a battle that has come to symbolise the idea of bravery against the odds. In 480 BC, 300 indomitable Spartan troops, led by King Leonidas, held the narrow pass of Thermopylae ("The Hot Gates") for three days against thousands of invading Persian troops. All but two of the men fought to the death in one of the most famous clashes of ancient history.

But how much of what we think we know about Thermopylae, especially the account given by Greek historian Herodotus (c484–c425 BC), can be trusted? How important was the battle strategically? And what happened in its aftermath?

In a one-off documentary marking the 2,500th anniversary of Thermopylae, classicist and comedian Jon Harvey takes a myth-busting look back to the ancient world with the help of such experts as historians Paul Cartledge, Polly Low and Nanno Marinatos. Harvey also traces how the battle has become a potent symbol in our own time, whether that's via films such as the Hollywood blockbuster *300* or in the culture surrounding events such as endurance races.

Happy 2500th to the Brave 300!

BBC Radio 4 / Monday 30 August

WEEKLY TV & RADIO

Visit historyextra.com for weekly updates on upcoming television and radio programmes

HISTORY ON THE AIRWAVES

"The Nuremberg trials were talked about around our house as a monumental event"



The dramatist **JONATHAN MYERSON** tells us about his series charting the prosecution of leading Nazis in 1946 – from the intricacies of the preparations for the trials to the horrors of the survivors' testimonies

How did your series on the trials at Nuremberg come about?

The first reason is that it's the 75th anniversary of the trials. The other reason is that my father [Aubrey Myerson] was a QC. He was a teenager in 1946, but he later worked with British lawyers who had been at Nuremberg, and the trials were talked about around our house as a monumental event – and, it's worth throwing in here, my father was Jewish. But it wasn't until I started researching the trials that I learnt that they so nearly didn't happen.

What were the chief difficulties of staging the trials?

The intricacies of the story are amazing. Different countries had to shoehorn their legal systems together. Britain and America were keen the defendants be tried for conspiracy, but in France they didn't have a law of conspiracy. Another major problem was that in Britain and America we have the adversarial system of lawyers for the defence and prosecution, but in Russia and France the judge asks the questions, and the same in Germany.

They eventually hammered out a system that was around 80 per cent British-American. This put the German lawyers at a huge disadvantage because they had never done cross-examination. Göring's lawyer called three generals to say what a terrific chap Göring was. And all the cross-examining lawyer had to do was say: "General, do you remember killing all these civilians in Italy?..."

How did you shape the drama?

Previous dramatisations have been a top-down, *Game of Thrones* look at Nuremberg. And I suddenly realised the Allies, for instance, had a staff of 400. I wanted to see what it was like at ground level, as an interpreter or a journalist. One of the people I feature is a young Airey

Neave, who escaped from Colditz, and later became an MP. A barrister, fluent in German, he was appointed liaison between judges and defendants. It became his job to find German lawyers for the men who ran the Gestapo, which had tortured him.

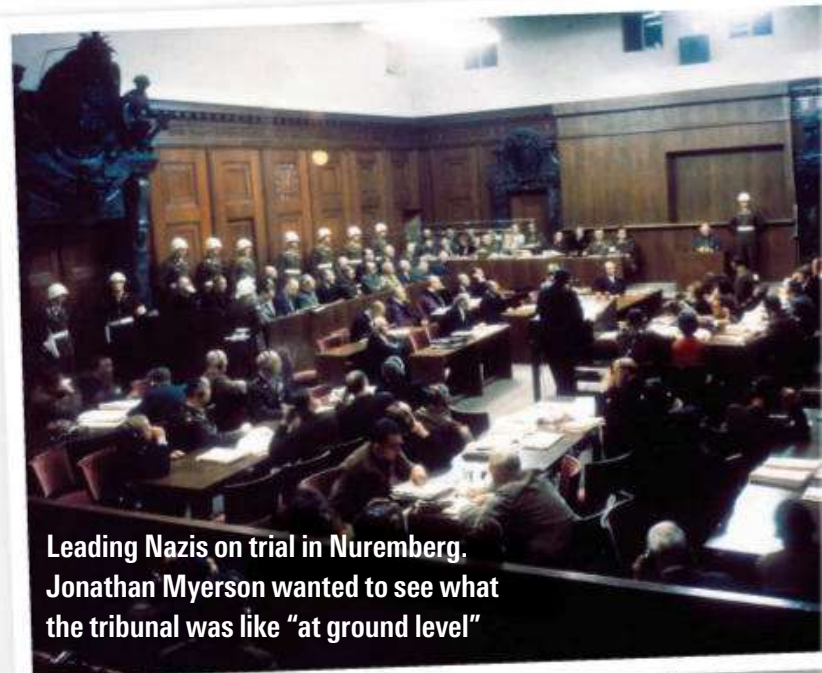
Did you feel the weight of these events?

Yes. Part of what I wanted to do was to capture what it was like to investigate the Holocaust for the first time ever. I can't think there was ever a worse place on the planet than Belsen, and the British Army drove into it to find 60,000 people starving or dying of disease. A significant contingent of the prisoners had been shipped out of Auschwitz. British investigators were talking to Auschwitz survivors and these people were telling them about rooms specifically designed to gas thousands of people a day. The investigators were literally saying, "What?" Which you would, hearing this for the first time. **H**

Nuremberg starts on Radio 4 –

and will be available as a boxset on

BBC Sounds in full – from Friday 27 August



Leading Nazis on trial in Nuremberg. Jonathan Myerson wanted to see what the tribunal was like "at ground level"



Roly-poly pudding: a tasty and filling treat enjoyed at the turn of the 20th century

TASTE

Roly-poly pudding

Roly-poly pudding is cheap, quick and easy to make. As well as being incredibly tasty, it's also very filling, perfect for the workhouse inmates who would have tucked into it in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. This recipe (which makes 1lb of pudding) is wonderfully flexible – you can add salt to taste, boil or steam it, and take your pick of jams. And, for a truly hearty dessert, why not cover it in custard?

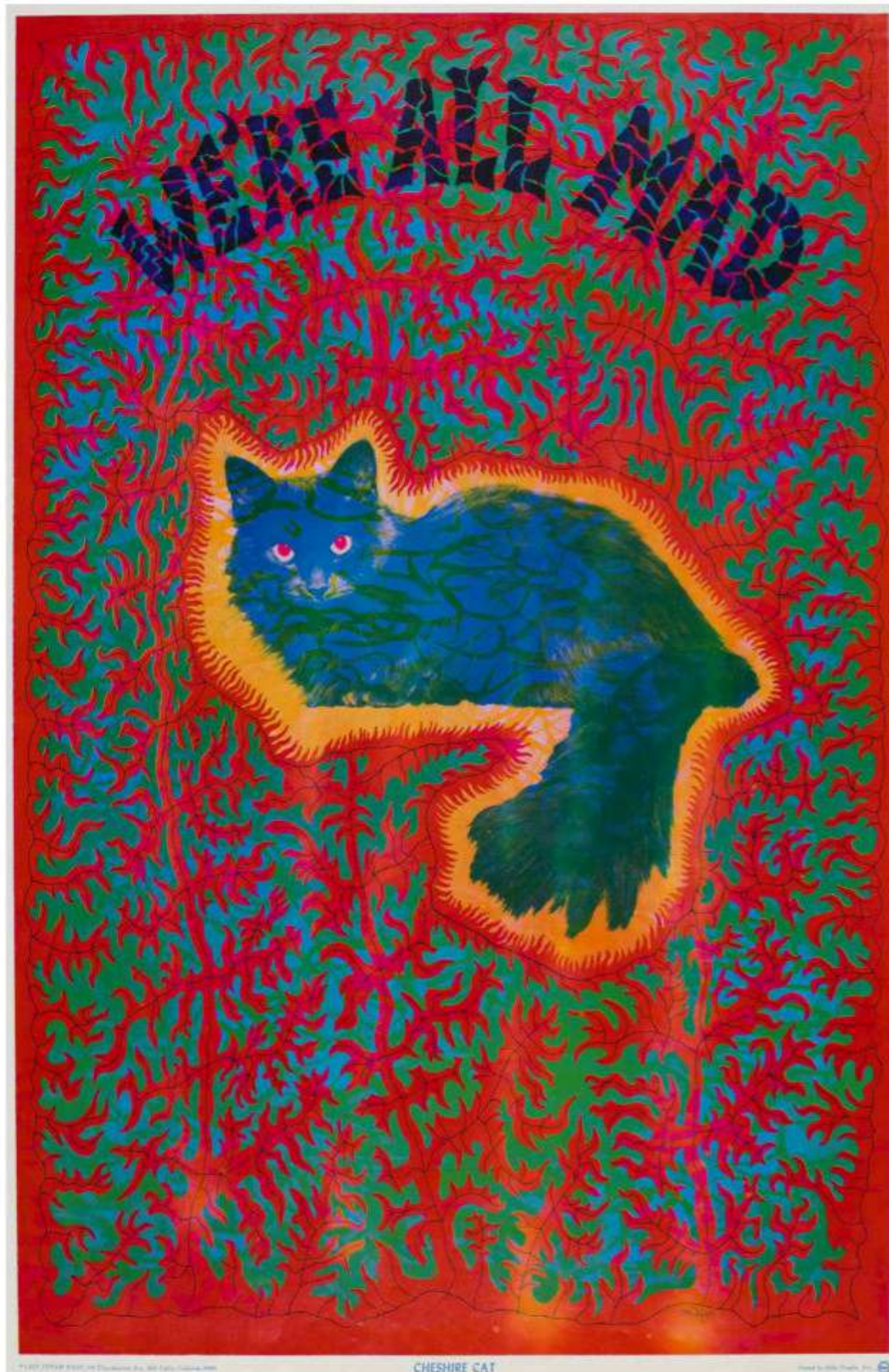
INGREDIENTS

8 oz flour
1½ gills water (just over quarter of a pint)
2 oz shredded beef suet
1tsp baking powder
1½ oz jam
Salt to pref
Baking paper
String

METHOD

Mix the suet, flour, baking powder and salt with the water. Roll out the dough onto a floured surface. Spread the jam over the dough and wet the edges. Roll up, pressing edges together. Tie it up fairly tightly in a floured pudding cloth or baking paper. Tie the ends with string to keep the cylindrical shape. Boil or steam for two hours, or until cooked. Sieve icing sugar over the top or serve with custard.

Recipe adapted from the Manual of Workhouse Cookery (1901). To read our feature on workhouses, turn to page 20



Joseph McHugh's psychedelic spin on the Cheshire cat from 1967 is one of the highlights of an exhibition exploring the creativity inspired by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

VISIT

Down the rabbit hole

Published in 1865, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has spawned countless artworks, costumes and films. Now, a new exhibition from the V&A explores this outpouring of creativity, taking us from more popular versions – such as Disney's technicolour cartoon – to less well-known interpretations of the novel.

The Cheshire cat is given the psychedelic treatment by Joseph McHugh in a 1967 print, with its burning red eyes glowing from the wall. The Red Queen is reimagined as an haute couture ballerina, with her cherry-red

dress about to be pried open by two soldiers. And Alice, of course, is everywhere: in an ethereal screen-print by Peter Blake; illustrations from the first edition of Carroll's novel; and a photograph of Alice Liddell, who was the inspiration for Carroll's character.

Visitors can also get closer to Alice's world via the exhibition's immersive stage-sets, and are even able to take part in a virtual-reality croquet game.

Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser

V&A, London / Until 31 December / Booking required / vam.ac.uk

WATCH

Dynastic ambitions

Having previously dropped out of the schedules at the last moment, docudrama *The Boleyns: A Scandalous Family* is now set for transmission. Unusually for a Tudor history series, it's not a story with Henry VII or his descendants at its centre. Instead, over three episodes, it focuses on how one ambitious clan ascended to power and influence at dizzying speed, only to fall spectacularly from favour.

That this happened at all was in great part down to Thomas Boleyn, a charmer whose family had made money from the wool trade. In a match of mutual interest – the Boleyns had wealth, the Howards a title – Thomas married Elizabeth Howard. The Boleyns had the first of the connections they needed to make their way at court.

It was social climbing that would culminate with Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn. But this was a match the king came to see as cursed, and both Anne and her brother, George, were executed after the king fixed his attention on Jane Seymour. And yet the Boleyns did ultimately fulfil their ambitions when, in 1558, Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, became queen.

The Boleyns: A Scandalous Family

BBC Two / Expected to air in early August



Plymouth's newly restored Elizabethan House offers an insight into more than four centuries of the city's history

VISIT

Seafront stories

One of Plymouth's oldest buildings has just had a makeover. Following a six-year restoration project, the 16th-century Elizabethan House – originally a letting house on the city's waterfront – has just reopened complete with a new audio-visual tour.

Visitors can now take an immersive journey through the restored rooms (boasting original features such as timber frames and leaded windows) and share the stories of the generations of workers and families who lived in the house, including its very first owner.

Elizabethan House

Plymouth / Open now / Booking required / theboxplymouth.com



Rafaëlle Cohen plays Anne Boleyn in a docudrama on a family that "ascended to power at dizzying speed, only to fall spectacularly from favour"



VISIT

Changing legacy

David Livingstone – born in a squalid tenement in Blantyre in 1813 – left his native Scotland behind and forged a reputation for himself as one of the great explorers of the Victorian age.

Livingstone's life is among the most celebrated in Scottish history, and – following a £9.1m regeneration – you can trace his journey at the museum of his birthplace, featuring a new interactive exhibition. One of the highlights of the museum is a re-creation of the room in which he was born (shown above).

Although he was once seen as a hero – he was an abolitionist and missionary – Livingstone's legacy today is somewhat murkier, and the museum also explores colonisation's impact on Africa.

David Livingstone Birthplace

Blantyre / Open now / Booking recommended / david-livingstone-birthplace.org



A new exhibition offers an artistic interpretation of Tokyo's evolution from tiny fishing village to neon-bright metropolis

VISIT

Tokyo transformed

Tokyo has undergone explosive changes in the last few centuries, transforming from a tiny fishing village called Edo into the neon-bright metropolis we know today. A new exhibition at the Ashmolean celebrates the city through the artwork it's created over the centuries.

Highlights include exquisite paintings from the 1603–1867 Edo period (when Japan shut its borders and sequestered itself from the outside world), such as Utagawa Hiroshige's delicate prints depicting Tokyo through the seasons.

The natural disasters that have torn down the city and forced it to rebuild are reflected in the exhibition, too, through *namazu-e* (woodblock prints) that show the giant catfish of legend who were believed to rock Japan's islands during times of social and political disharmony.

Modern artworks encapsulating the city's westernisation, as well as its famous entertainment and sex industry, are also included.

Tokyo: Art and Photography

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford / Until 3 January 2022 / Booking required / ashmolean.org



Top-notch cast: Sophie Okonedo (centre) plays Hemple in the third season of *Britannia*

WATCH

Invasion and rebellion

No, life in Britain in the years after the Roman invasion of AD 43 probably wasn't much like it's portrayed in *Britannia*. But no matter. Jez Butterworth's drama is always worth watching. As the third season begins, Cait's destiny as the Chosen One sees her life taking a new direction.

Elsewhere, the wife of Roman general Aulus puts pressure on her husband, and druid Veran goes to the underworld, where he sees the future. As ever, the tone is pitched somewhere just short of psychedelic derangement, but somehow it all works, perhaps because the top-notch cast includes the likes of David Morrissey, Sophie Okonedo and Mackenzie Crook. **H**

Britannia

Sky Atlantic / Tuesday 24 August

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EXPLORE... STOCKPORT AIR RAID SHELTERS

Going underground

Deep below Stockport town centre lies a maze of sandstone tunnels, where thousands of locals once sought safety during the darkest days of the Blitz. Now preserved as a tourist attraction, the shelters serve as a poignant reminder of war's impact on civilian life. **NICK RENNISON** pays a visit

Outside, the sun is shining down on Chestergate in the centre of Stockport, Greater Manchester. But inside the labyrinth of interconnected tunnels that constitute the town's air raid shelters, it's dark and damp, and there's a chill in the air. This is not a place for those who suffer from claustrophobia, but the shelters provide a fascinating insight into what it was like for local civilians seeking refuge from German bombs during the Second World War.

In 1938, workmen demolishing properties in Chestergate as part of a road-widening scheme discovered cellars dug out of the sandstone on which Stockport centre is built. At first it was suggested that these should be extended to create an underground car park, but war was looming, and the town's authorities decided that air raid shelters would be a better idea. They were opened by the mayoress in October 1939, a month after conflict had been declared, and consisted of two main tunnels with 19 shorter ones running between them. The facility was initially capable of accommodating 4,000 people, but further expansion provided room for another 2,500 visitors to what soon became known as "the Chestergate Hotel".

Bedding down for the night

During the period often dubbed the "Phoney War", air raid precautions were taken lightly – but all this changed with the Blitz. In December 1940, Manchester was the target of heavy bombing raids, and nearby Stockport suffered too, with 10 high-explosive bombs and thousands of incendiaries

// The shelters could get rowdy... wardens would lock anyone who was too disruptive in an empty tool store to cool down //

dropped on the town. The Chestergate shelters came into their own, and people began to travel from miles around to use them. In fact, they were so popular that a ticket system had to be introduced.

Displays in the shelters today, along with an audio guide, give some sense of those nights underground. ARP (Air Raid Precautions) wardens were placed in charge, and after October 1940, a thousand bunks were installed. Mattresses and pillows were provided, but people had to bring other bedding themselves and take it away in the morning.

There was a canteen run by the Women's Voluntary Service that provided basic refreshments, and extra jugs of tea were carried from the nearby UCP (United Cattle Products) Tripe Restaurant – one of a chain of such establishments in the North West. Electric lighting illuminated the tunnels and basic urinals existed with torn-up squares of newspaper hung on strings for toilet paper. "Rubbing newspaper between your knuckles will soften it," users were told.

Sing-songs and darts matches kept people amused, and entertainers from the Plaza Cinema and Variety Theatre across the road performed their party pieces. The shelters could get rowdy – particularly after the pubs closed – and the wardens would lock anyone who was too disruptive in an empty tool store to cool down. (There were 35 tool stores in total, each equipped with a shovel, pick and crowbar to deal with any bomb damage.)

As the war progressed, raids became much less frequent, and the numbers in the shelters dropped dramatically. By the time they closed in October 1943, there were only eight regulars. The tunnels were sealed at the end of the war and remained almost untouched until they were reopened as a visitor attraction in 1996 to introduce new generations to the realities of wartime life. **H**

Nick Rennison is a writer and regular contributor to *BBC History Magazine*

VISIT For more information on the shelters, go to stockport.gov.uk/about-the-air-raid-shelters

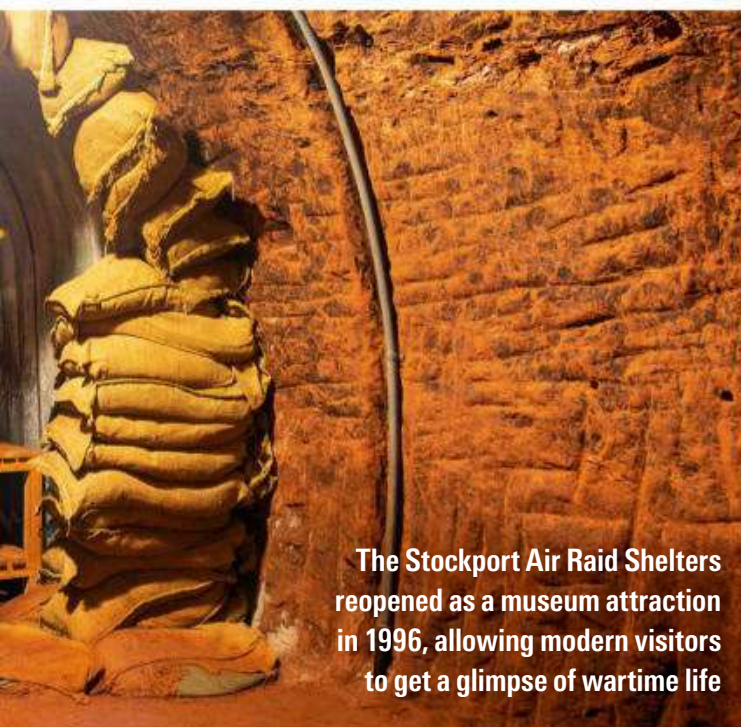


GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/STOCKPORT LOCAL HERITAGE LIBRARY



Children find warmth among the rubble during the Manchester Blitz, March 1941. German raids on the city also affected neighbouring towns such as Stockport

Stockport residents – and other people travelling from further afield – descended into the shelters via sets of steps in the middle of Chestergate



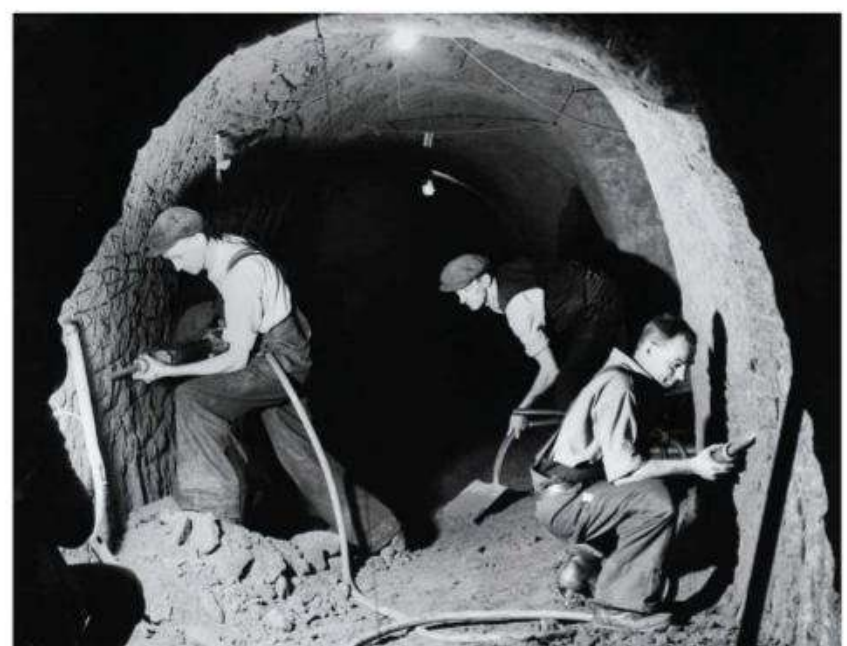
The Stockport Air Raid Shelters reopened as a museum attraction in 1996, allowing modern visitors to get a glimpse of wartime life



Nurses from Stockport Infirmary looked after a first aid post inside the shelters, while the Women's Voluntary Service ran a canteen



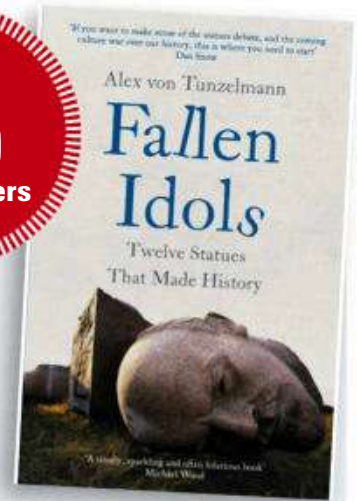
Locals make their way into the shelters. Designed with a capacity of 4,000 in mind, the tunnel system was expanded to accommodate an extra 2,500 visitors



Workmen help dig the shelters in June 1939. The tunnels were initially formed from older cellars that had been discovered the previous year

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Fallen Idols: Twelve Statues That Made History

By Alex von Tunzelmann

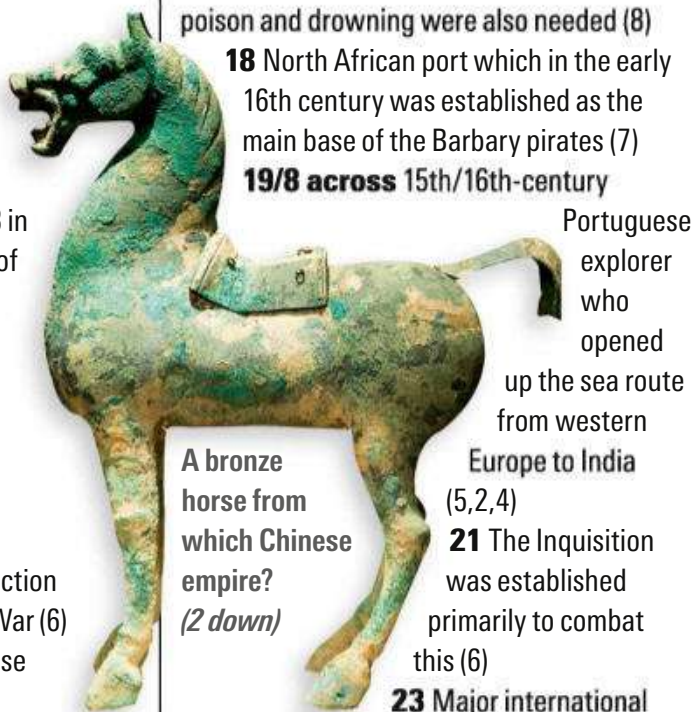
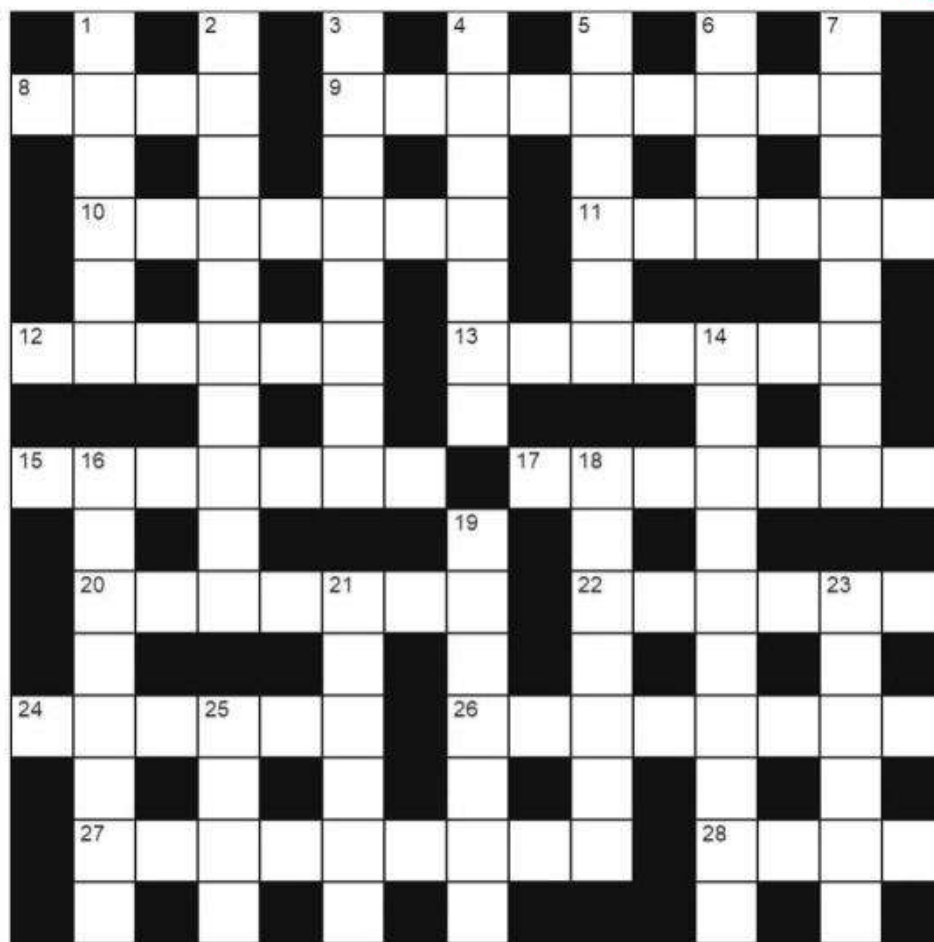
In this fascinating new book, Alex von Tunzelmann considers how statues can help us tell history – and the controversy they can cause. Focusing on 12 statues, she examines why they were put up; the stories they were supposed to convey; and why they came down. To read our interview with Alex, turn to page 74.

Across

- 8 See 19 down
9 Born Elizabeth Griscom in 1752, she helped design the first flag of the United States (according to family stories) (5,4)
10 Small European principality governed solely by Spanish and French “co-princes” until its new constitution in 1993 (7)
11 Second-century AD Greek historian, author of a work about Alexander the Great’s military exploits (6)
12 A major deity of ancient Egypt (in fact a fusion of two gods) (4–2)
13 Term for a law officer that in England dates back to before the Norman Conquest (7)
15 In Hinduism, the supreme god (7)
17 In 1762 a treaty was concluded by this princely state of north-east India with the British to expel the occupying (Myanmar) Burmans (7)
20 Ancient area of Eurasia whose ancient nomadic tribespeople are renowned for their “animal style” art (7)
22 First name of the English preacher who founded the Society of Friends, or Quakers, in the mid-17th century (6)
24 The title assumed by Adolf Hitler to establish his role as absolute leader of Germany (6)
26 The first Native American newspaper was published in 1828 in New Echota, Georgia, the capital of the ____ Nation at the time (8)
27 Nickname for Oliver Cromwell and his troops (9)
28 In Greek mythology, a nymph spurned by Narcissus (4)

Down

- 1 A controversial means of destruction used by US forces in the Vietnam War (6)
2 One of the greatest of the Chinese empires, lasting for more than 400 years, split between the western and the eastern periods (3,7)
3 Scotland’s “Granite City”, named after the material used in many of its buildings (8)
4 Richard ____, the composer controversially associated with the Nazi regime, though his name was eventually cleared by an Allied tribunal (7)
5 Site of a major battle of the Greco-Persian wars, in 479 BC, that ended the Persian invasion (6)
6 Term originally applied to a Muslim inhabitant of al-Andalus (Iberian peninsula) (4)
7 The virus subtype H2N2 caused the “____” pandemic of 1957/58 (5,3)
14 British architect responsible for London’s Banqueting House in Whitehall (1619–22) (5,5)
16 Notorious Russian royal advisor who was shot to death in 1916, although some claim



poison and drowning were also needed (8)

- 18 North African port which in the early 16th century was established as the main base of the Barbary pirates (7)
19/8 across 15th/16th-century

Portuguese explorer who opened up the sea route from western Europe to India (5,2,4)

A bronze horse from which Chinese empire? (2 down)

- 21 The Inquisition was established primarily to combat this (6)

- 23 Major international literary figure, born in

Frankfurt but based in Weimar from 1775 until his death in 1832 (6)

- 25 A representation of Christ’s cross; also an old measure of a quarter of an acre (4)

Compiled by **Eddie James**



Who is this renowned German author who died in 1832? (23 down)

HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to **BBC History Magazine, September 2021 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to **september2021@historycomps.co.uk** by 5pm on 1 September 2021. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners’ names will appear in the November 2021 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at [immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/](https://www.immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/). ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write ‘NO INFO’ on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ☐ if you’d like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: [bbcstudios.com/privacy](https://www.bbcstudios.com/privacy). – [bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct](https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct)

Solution to our July 2021 crossword

- Across** 7 Uganda 9 Minstrel 11 Ladysmith 12 Annie 13 Snooker
14 Mary I 16 Hughes 17 Acadia 20 VJ Day 21 Kassite 23 Lynch
25 Anastasia 27 Emmeline 28 Scurvy
Down 1 Sulla 2 Ward 3 Wishart 4 Isca 5 Ironbridge 6 Algeciras
8 Discovery 10 Vicky 13 Segedunum 14 McClintock 15 Chevalier
18 Ukraine 19 Isaac 22 Katyn 24 Hill 26 Serf

Five winners of Ancestors

P Cook, Suffolk; T Bowditch, Cornwall; W Pitt, Gloucestershire;
L Heath, West Sussex; CM Cooksey, West Midlands

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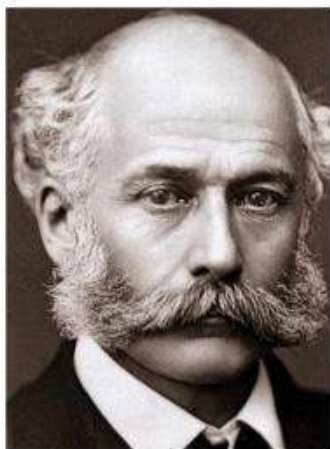
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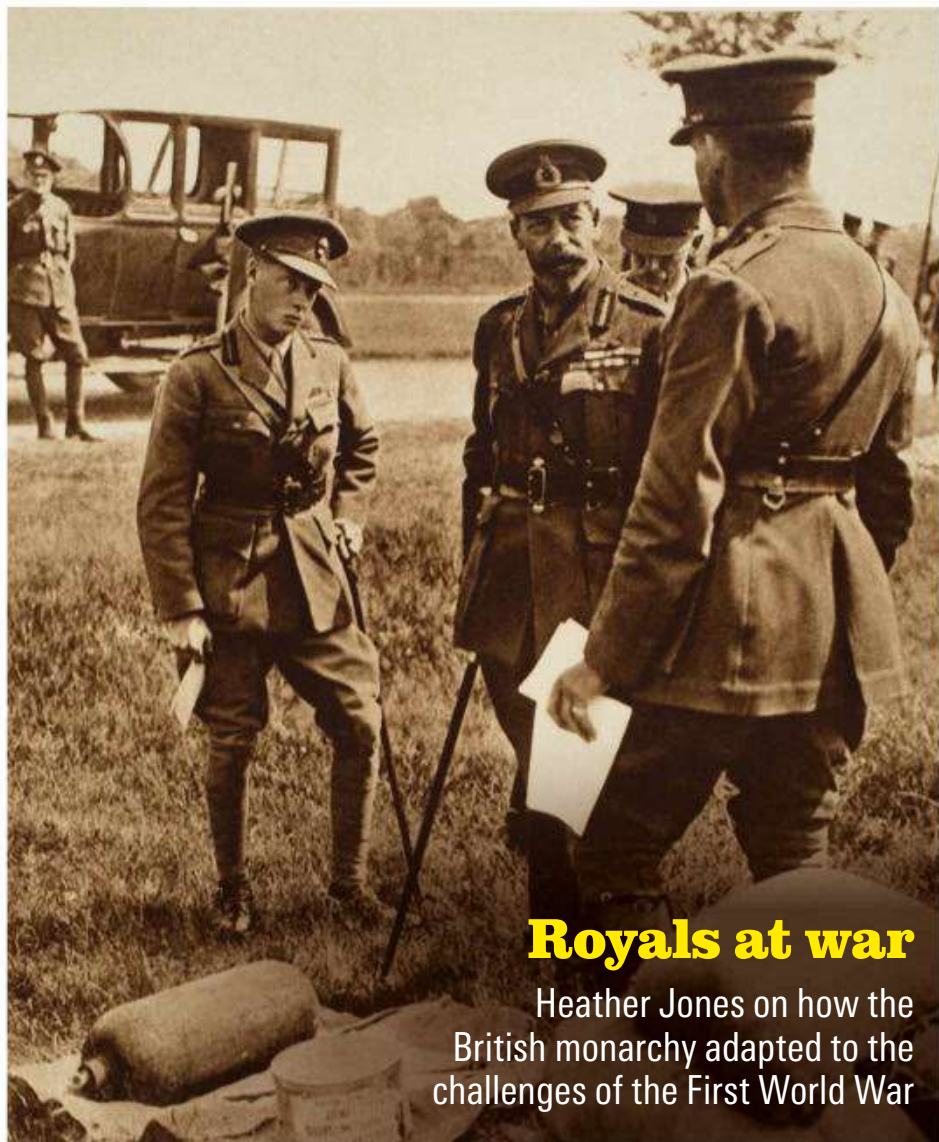
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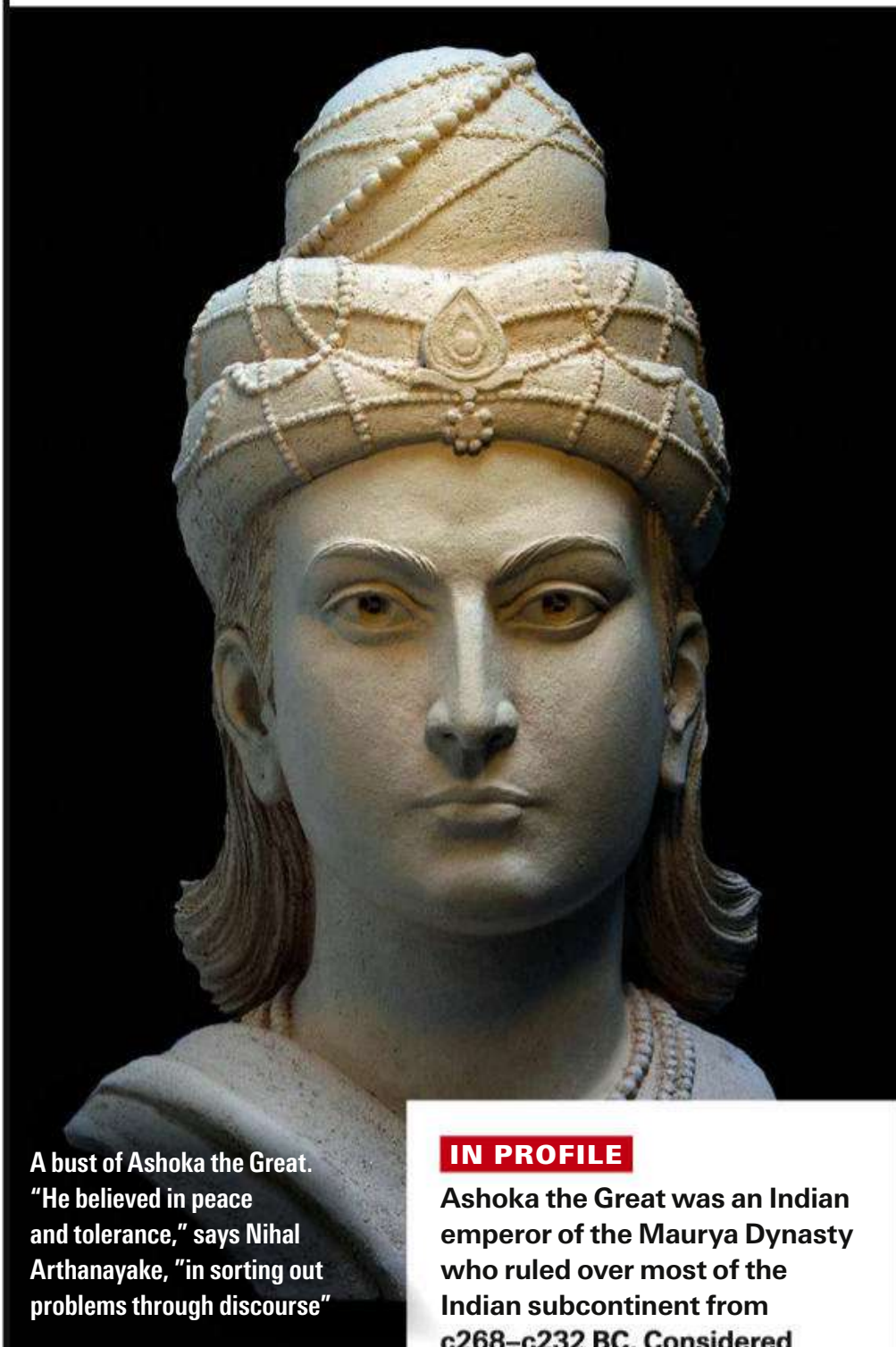
BBC radio presenter Nihal Arthanayake chooses

Ashoka the Great

c304–c232 BC



Nihal Arthanayake presents the afternoon show on BBC Radio 5 Live. Twitter and Instagram @TherealNihal



A bust of Ashoka the Great. "He believed in peace and tolerance," says Nihal Arthanayake, "in sorting out problems through discourse"

IN PROFILE

Ashoka the Great was an Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty who ruled over most of the Indian subcontinent from c268–c232 BC. Considered one of India's greatest emperors, he also promoted the spread of Buddhism across ancient Asia. The Ashoka Chakra (the "wheel of righteousness") appears on the flag of modern India.

// He made this astonishing transition from being a brutal military leader to an extraordinary, wise human being //

When did you first hear about Ashoka? I was brought up a Buddhist so I've been aware of Emperor Ashoka ever since I was a child. He is the reason my family are Buddhists – his children were responsible for spreading the Buddhist doctrine in Sri Lanka, where my family originate.

What kind of man was he? Ashoka changed throughout his life, like so many of us. He started out as a cruel, vicious ruler intent on power, but the remorse he felt after waging a destructive war in what is now eastern India led to him adopting Buddhism. So he made this astonishing transition from being a brutal military leader to an extraordinary, wise human being.

What made him a hero? First, the fact that he was able to do something that so many modern leaders aren't able to do: admit he was wrong and change his mind. Second, he believed in peace and tolerance, in sorting out problems through discourse, and he built hospitals for both humans and animals. He also realised that trade routes across India needed inns, wells and shade for those who used them. In short, he cared, but he wasn't hippy-dippy about it; he was practical rather than dogmatic.

What was Ashoka's finest hour? One of his finest hours was to realise that if he was to get the Buddhist message out there, it would have to be in the various languages of the region. He was an incredible visionary in that respect.

Is there anything that you don't particularly admire about him? It goes without saying that I don't admire the slaughtering associated with his earlier adult life – I'd be a psychopath if I did! The other big failing of his life was his succession planning; his empire went into decline upon his death and much of what he achieved was destroyed.

Can you see any parallels between Ashoka's life and your own? Like him, I'm a Buddhist and eat very little meat. Again like him, I'd also like to consider myself a pretty tolerant person, regardless of the occasional Twitter spats I sometimes find myself embroiled in.

Do you think that history teaching is too Eurocentric? Yes. Too often the impression is given that the entire history of progress is western, which is a false narrative. Given the size of the Indian population in the UK, and the high profile of many British-Asians, I think it is important for Ashoka's story to be given prominence. 

Nihal Arthanayake was talking to York Membery

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